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THE
CHRISTIAN HOME,
BY
FREDERICK CHALMERS,

49.783.



49.783.



THE
CHRISTIAN HOME;
OR,
SEVEN SERMONS ON DOMESTIC DUTIES,
PREACHED AT
LEAMINGTON.

BY
FREDERICK CHALMERS,
LATE CURATE OF ST. MARY'S.

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MDCCCXLIX.



DEDICATION.

TO MY BELOVED FATHER-IN-LAW,
THE REV. WILLIAM MARSH, D.D.,
INCUMBENT OF ST. MARY'S AND HONORARY
CANON OF WORCESTER ;
WITH WHOM IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE TO SERVE,
AS A SON IN THE GOSPEL, FOR SIX YEARS ;
BY WHOSE EXAMPLE I HAVE FREQUENTLY BEEN HUMBLLED ;
BY WHOSE SPIRIT OF LOVE AND
UNDEVIATING AFFECTION
I HAVE CONSTANTLY BEEN CHEERED AND ENCOURAGED ;
AND IN WHOSE PULPIT THEY
WERE PREACHED,
THESE SERMONS ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY HIS GRATEFUL AND ATTACHED
FREDK. CHALMERS.

P R E F A C E.

AT the request of several friends and hearers, these Sermons are published by the Author, who is conscious both of the great importance of their subject, and the many imperfections in the manner in which it has been treated.

Not a few of the leading thoughts will be found in a most admirable work entitled *The Domestic Constitution*, by the Rev. Christopher Anderson, of Edinburgh; to the perusal of which, and the deep impression made by it on his own mind, the Author is indebted for the first idea of treating the subject in a connected series of discourses from the pulpit. If the reader of this little volume should be induced, in a spirit of prayer, to consult that excellent treatise, to imbibe the spirit in which it is written, and to become thoroughly acquainted with the sound Scriptural principles which are propounded, and the rich Scriptural illustrations which are adduced in it, the Author will be satisfied that this imperfect attempt, to follow in the same track, has not been in vain.

LEAMINGTON,

MAY, 1849.

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SERMON I.

ON THE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS.

SERMON I.

ON THE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS.

1 PETER iii, 7.

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life ; that your prayers be not hindered.”

THE more we examine the sacred Scriptures and compare them with the structure and condition of society at large, the more shall we be convinced of the obligations of all classes of persons in our own happy country, to the influence, direct and indirect, of God's Holy Word. We need not, therefore, be surprised should we feel ourselves placed under the same obligations in the nearest and tenderest relation of life, that of husband and wife ; a relation, on the auspicious or adverse tendency of which, more than any other earthly tie, our temporal happiness or misery depends.

In the Greek republics great violations of liberty prevailed with respect to this most sacred and personal relation of life. Those who did not marry were liable to public prosecution. Even the mild and philosophic Plato proposes, that persons not marrying at thirty-five years of age should be punishable with fine and disgrace. The choice of his bride was not left to the husband, neither was the personal consent of the woman necessary, and when married, the wife for the most part, lived in a separate and inferior part of the house. Aristotle, in accordance with this practice, defines the relation between husbands and wives to be similar to that between governors and subjects. Among the heathen nations, ancient and modern, the very notion of married happiness, in a Christian sense of the term, was and would be a mockery. It is the blessed Word of God alone which introduces the voice of Love into the household ; substitutes peace for contention ; companionship, counsel, and consolation, for tyranny, discord, and abject or unwilling subjection. Let me, then, draw your attention—

I. TO THE GENERAL TESTIMONY OF THE SCRIPTURES, CONCERNING THE MARRIAGE UNION.

II. TO THE PARTICULAR DUTIES OF HUSBANDS ENFORCED BY THE TEXT.

III. To the PREVAILING MOTIVE BY WHICH THESE DUTIES ARE ENJOINED.

I. Let us consider THE GENERAL TESTIMONY OF THE SCRIPTURES, CONCERNING THE MARRIAGE UNION.

The Book of God may almost be said to open with God's blessing upon the marriage state, and to close with a blessing upon it. It alone, of all the books in the world, gives to the husband and wife their true relative character, entwining both together in a common bond of holy tenderness and love. It is a remarkable fact, that there seems to exist, in some measure, a connexion of moral affinity between the aptitude to receive pure Christianity, and the disposition to exalt woman to her rightful place in society. The Teutonic nations amount to about eighty-two millions of the human race, and have always been distinguished above the majority of the Celtic nations, whom they overran, by a better and more considerate treatment of woman; and it is a singular circumstance, brought to light by Mr. Macaulay, in his late elegant history, that no nations, except those speaking a Teutonic language, have nationally embraced and maintained the doctrines of the glorious Reformation.

But to return to the Word of God: it opens with

His blessing on the marriage union, and places both husband and wife in their true and tender relation to each other. It describes *both* as bearing equally the image of God—"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them."* It describes both as having joint and co-ordinate dominion, "And God blessed *them*, and said unto *them*, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and *subdue it*; and *have dominion* over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air; and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."†

It describes man's solitude without the woman; "And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an *help meet for him*."‡ It describes the entire unity and oneness subsisting between them both, and the source of the husband's affection for the wife, even because she is none other than himself. "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said,

* Gen. i, 27.

† Gen. i., 28.

‡ Gen. ii., 20.

this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman; because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.”*

This mutual equality was modified by the sin of the woman, in listening to the voice of the serpent, and not taking counsel with her guardian, her companion, and friend; for the Lord said unto the woman, “In sorrow thou shalt bring forth thy children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”† The woman was thus, in punishment for her pride and independence, placed in a position not only of dependence, but of greater subjection; but this curse was turned into a blessing through Christ—being made subservient to the typifying more fully the relation between the Church and the Lord Jesus. For as Christ seeks and chooses the Church which is to be subject to Him, so the husband seeks and chooses the wife who is to obey him. If the woman have sorrow, it is in bringing forth children, so that the sorrow is turned into joy. If she be in subjection, it is not to a stranger who hates her, but unto her husband who cherishes her; and if he rules in love, her desire

* Gen. ii., 21—24, † Gen. iii., 16.

will be to him whom she obeys. It is the religion of the Bible, in the heart, which alone brings this to pass. It makes the dominion tender, and the subjection sweet.

Passing over many examples of conjugal affection in the historic portion of Holy Writ, we come to the injunction of the wise man to the husband, to "Rejoice with the wife of his youth."* And Malachi, the last prophet, who closes the Old Testament dispensation, gives a warning precept to husbands, "Take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth;"† declaring in the verse before, "Yet is she thy *companion*, and the wife of thy covenant."

The New Testament maintains, throughout its course, the same language as to the sanctity and inviolability of the conjugal relation. Thus we find our blessed Lord speaking in the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew, "Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female; And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh; therefore they are no more twain, but one flesh; what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." And the

* *Proverbs* v., 18.

† *Malachi* ii., 14, 15.

same intimacy of union, and tenderness of affinity, is enjoined by St. Paul, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where having said, "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man, neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man," he immediately subjoins, "nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man, in the Lord ; for as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman ; but all things of God."* Thus shewing the mutual dependence of both, and arguing or a consequent reciprocity of affection and esteem. The exquisitely tender appeal to the heart of husbands, in the fifth chapter to the Ephesians, is, I trust, familiar to many of you—"Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it ; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of waters, by the word ; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, *even as the Lord the Church.*"

* 1 Cor. xi., 7—12.

Finally, as we have said, the New Testament closes with an allusive blessing on the marriage union ; for it closes with the glories of the antitype. It tells us, that the blessedness of the saints shall be consummated at the "*Marriage Supper of the Lamb*," and conjoins the Church, with the ever blessed Spirit, under the same image, in the last inspired invitation to returning sinners, "The Spirit AND THE BRIDE say, Come!"

II. Let me call your attention to the PARTICULAR DUTIES OF HUSBANDS ENJOINED IN OUR TEXT.

We have already alluded* to the union of love, confidence, and subjection between Christ and his Church, as at once the antitype and rule of the marriage union. This is set before husbands as their great ruling principle—the principle which is to animate and guide their conduct. Now, the Lord Jesus desires and seeks the entire subjection of his people to himself, because it is for their happiness, safety, and advantage to render it to Him ; but in order to obtain it from them, He shews forth the most self-renouncing love, the most long-suffering patience, the most tender and watchful regard, the most far-sighted wisdom, the most provident care. This is the pattern for the Christian husband ; this

* Ephesians v., 25—28.

is the life and soul of the duties enjoined in our text.

The first word in the text is striking—" *Likewise*, ye husbands," &c. The apostle Peter had been speaking, in the second chapter, on the duties of subjects to sovereigns, and of servants to masters, and this third chapter begins with " *Likewise*, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." Now, this seems to be congruous and corresponding; for the subjection of the wife is kindred to, and cognate with, the subjection of any other subordinate position. But how shall we reconcile this " *likewise*" to the position and duty of a superior? The meekness and gentleness of Christ, our pattern and exemplar, will alone explain the apparent anomaly. He was our "Master and Lord," yet, in order that he might be served, was He among his disciples, "as one that served."* And this is precisely the husband's rule. Knowing and feeling his position of ruler in the sight of God; realizing the corresponding duty to God, which, as a ruler, he is to maintain; yet must he put away all self-will and selfishness, and seek to shew, that, whenever his responsibility, as head of the family, will permit, he too may serve, yea, submit. This is the general spirit of the Christian husband; to feel

* Luke xxii., 17.

the duty and responsibility to rule, and yet to be ready whenever his own will, and not principle or duty, is concerned, to give way, and like his blessed Master to be ready to serve. This will explain every thing that follows. This will be a key to all the rest; and this will be to give another proof that to *know Christ* is to know every thing; but that without Him you can do nothing. The other duties which follow and flow from this cardinal principle are—friendly companionship, and scrupulous consideration.

i. FRIENDLY COMPANIONSHIP. “Likewise, ye husbands, *dwelt with them according to knowledge.*” As it is the wife’s duty to be a “keeper at home,” and forsaking all other to cleave only to her husband, so it is the husband’s duty to be, in the main, a domestic character. He always must have outdoor occupations and avocations. He may have special duties to his king, his country, his neighbour, and, as a Christian, to the church to which he belongs; duties to superiors, equals, friends, countrymen, Christian brethren; but, these done and discharged, his *home* is to be with his wife. No club-house, newsroom, public-house; no literary companions, boon companions, or even Christian companions are to interfere with this duty. He is to *dwelt with*

his wife. And this friendly companionship is to be "*according to knowledge.*" Knowing his office, as the head of the wife in the sight of God. Knowing his duty to God, to lead her and all under his roof to Christ; to see that the Lord Jesus be, in all things, honored, and the law of Christ, in all things, obeyed. Knowing, in short, that God has placed him, in Christ's stead, to be a gracious ruler, a wise and watchful protector, a sympathizing and affectionate friend, a prudent counsellor, and, as far as other duties will allow, a constant companion to his wife. Thus he is to dwell with her "*according to knowledge.*" And not only is this friendly companionship enjoined on the husband, in our text, but also,

ii. SCRUPULOUS CONSIDERATION. "*Giving all honor to the wife, as unto the weaker vessel.*" What a beautiful accuracy is there in the Word of God! All of us are alike—"earthen vessels." Our only possible excellency is in the grace of God which may be treasured in us. Now we know well, that the most beautiful and elegant vessels are the most fragile. They are the most readily broken, marred, or disfigured. The exquisitely delicate porcelain vase may contain more costly odour or precious ointment than the coarsest or commonest

earthen jar ; but it is not held so firmly and strongly, and that just from the fineness and elegance of the vessel. Just so is it with woman. Grace in her may be more abundant, as it is commonly more lovely and attractive than in man ; but it is contained in a more fragile enclosure. Now the Word of God precisely meets this condition. It confirms the word of a late elegant writer, "A woman's whole life is the history of her affections. The heart is her world." And it is just for this reason ; because of the acuteness of woman's feelings, and the keenness of her susceptibilities ; because her affections are so readily wounded, and her peace so easily broken ; it is exactly because of this, that just as we would preserve and guard, from blows or injury, the exquisitely finished porcelain vase, so should the husband, "*give all honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel.*" Remember, then, my dear friends, this portion of conjugal duty. While it is the husband's place to rule for God, still he is to give honor unto the wife. Wound not her feelings. Support her authority over children and dependents. Seek, by the most scrupulous consideration, by every means in your power, to strengthen, uphold, cheer, and comfort her.

The REASON of all this is added ; "*as heirs*

together of the grace of life." The weakness of the wife is neither reason nor excuse for separation from her society, neglect, or contempt. There is a deference DUE to *all* who are "heirs of the grace of life," and the wife of his bosom is to be made no exception by the husband. The husband is the head *for* Christ, and to carry out His purposes of moral government, but *in* Christ "there is neither male nor female."* The subjection of the wife is for her protection, and for mutual benefit. But it is a temporary ordinance and appointment. There is a time coming when it shall be done away, and then "there is no respect of persons," but "all shall be one in Christ Jesus."

III. Let us finally consider THE PREVAILING MOTIVE BY WHICH THESE DUTIES ARE ENFORCED.

"That your prayers be not hindered." My brethren, what is a poor weak man without prayer? He is a prisoner shut up in a pit, not only with no power to escape, but with no mourning voice to attract attention to his misery. He is like a slumberer in an oppressive dream, choking under some suffocating weight, or shrinking under some up-lifted knife, or hanging over some fearful precipice, and with no voice, or utterance, to cry for rescue.

* Galatians iii., 28.

Without prayer you are without valid pardon, true peace, solid comfort, satisfying contentment. How important is it, then, that your *prayers be not hindered!* Now, the Scripture, as we have seen, directs the husband to the general principle of self-denying love from the example of the Saviour; and the apostle Peter directs him, as we have seen in the text, to friendly companionship with, and scrupulous consideration for, his wife, lest *prayer be hindered*; that is, the success of private prayer, and the cordiality of their mutual and combined prayer.

i. As to the success of private prayer. There are two remarkable passages, on the subject of successful prayer, in the discourses of our Lord. The one is in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, "*Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*"* The other is in the sixth chapter of the same gospel, "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.*"† Now, if this be the

* Matt. v., 23, 24.

† Matt. v., 14, 15.

case with reference to the believer and his brethren, on the one hand, and with reference to men in general, on the other, how much more with reference to a wife? It becomes utterly impossible that there can be comfortable communion with God, that there can be confiding, prevailing, successful prayer on the part of a husband, while his heart is full of harshness, unkindness, or bitterness towards his wife.

11. But, in another sense, the direliction of the conjugal duties, of love and kindness, on the part of a husband, will hinder prayer—and that is, that it will hinder the cordiality of mutually combined prayer. God makes many promises to combined prayer—“*If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, which is in heaven.*”^{*} But oneness in prayer must arise from agreement in heart; and how can this be when there is base and cruel tyranny lurking on the one side, and timid suspicion or wounded affection rankling on the other. Therefore, “*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being*

^{*} Matt. xviii., 19.

heirs together of the grace of life ; that your prayers be not hindered."

Let me apply the subject ; first, to those, however amiable, who do not yet know and love the Saviour so as to count Him truly precious, to depend on His grace, and seek the daily supply of His spirit, and daily direction of His word. I trust enough has been said to convince you of the utter insufficiency of your principles to fulfil these duties according to the standard of Christ's Gospel. Enough has been said to shew you, that your own principles are, in comparison to those of the Scripture, of a low, grovelling, earthborn nature. The marriage union, unsanctified by grace, loses all its true lustre, sweetness, happiness, and glory. O that this conviction may lead you to that Saviour from whom "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed!" O that it may lead you, in looking to your past omissions, to "the throne of grace, to find mercy, and to obtain grace to help in time of need!"

Secondly, to you, my Christian brethren, who know and love the Saviour, who feel your own unworthiness and sinfulness, but still strive and seek to follow him, to you let me say, suffer the word of exhortation. Remember the import-

ance of a clear conscience in domestic duties, and the especial value of such a conscience with reference to communion with God, and mutual and combined prayer. You depend every moment, for life, for mercy, for grace and peace, upon your God and Father in Christ. Be much in prayer alone, be much in prayer together, and see that there be no neglect of love, of consideration, of control, of counsel, of companionship, **“ THAT YOUR PRAYERS BE NOT HINDERED.”**

SERMON II.

ON THE DUTIES OF WIVES.

EPHESIANS V., 22—24.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

WE have already indirectly alluded, in addressing husbands, to the obligations of woman to the Word of God. Heathen nations, generally, degrade the female sex. In India and China, they are uneducated, and from this, and various other causes, degraded. Among Mahommedan nations, for the most part, they are regarded as mere appendages to man, to be multiplied and immured at his pleasure in this world, and even taking an inferior place in *their future imaginary paradise*. Among the civi-

lized Greeks, as we have already noticed, they were allowed no option in the choice of a husband before marriage, and were made to dwell in an inferior part of the house afterwards.

The Bible is emphatically and pre-eminently woman's charter. It alone tells us that God made both one; and though the woman was made for the man, and taken out of the man; yet man, owing his birth to woman, is *by* the woman. Yea, it tells us that Christ Himself was "*the seed of the woman,*" so making that part of humanity by which the fall entered, the link of restoration. It tells us that woman had equal dominion in the paradise which was lost; and of many women who so honored God, and followed the Lord Jesus, and succoured his disciples, that their names are enrolled among the noblest in the book of life, for exaltation and dignity in the paradise to be regained. It tells us of honor to the woman for her very weakness, and of the duty to treat her with especial care and tenderness from the very delicacy of the vessel in which God's grace resides.

And not only do the preceptive portions of Scripture unite in elevating woman to her due position, but a prominence is bestowed upon her in the historic portions, shewing that, irrespective of mere

piety, there was an educational advancement, a liberty of action, and a scope of influence systematically assigned to women among the people of God, which we look for in vain among nations unacquainted with Divine Revelation. We read of Rebecca's free and deliberate choice in accepting Isaac for her husband. Of Miriam's almost co-equality with Moses and Aaron. Of Deborah who judged Israel. Of prophetesses by whom the Lord taught Israel. Of Abigail and the pious Shunamite, who were respectively the means of deliverance and blessing to their households. While two whole books in the inspired Canon are devoted exclusively to the histories of two illustrious women—Ruth and Esther.

This is an outline of some of the privileges conferred on woman in the Word of God; it remains for us to consider some of her duties.

I. THE RULE OF THE WIFE'S SUBMISSION.

II. THE OBLIGATION TO THE WIFE'S SUBMISSION.

III. THE EXCEPTION TO THE WIFE'S SUBMISSION.

I. Let me then bring before you THE RULE of THE WIFE'S SUBMISSION. "*Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*"

(v. 22.) The rule is absolute, yet gracious and reasonable.

i. It is *absolute*. No Christian heart will doubt, dispute, or disparage Christ's prerogative to rule. Even so there ought to be neither doubt or dispute as to the husband's prerogative. Christ's will is to be the rule of His Church, Christ's word her law. The rule extends to little things as well as to great things. Nothing should be done by the Church which may be contrary to the mind, and will, and word of Christ; so nothing should be done by the wife which is contrary to the mind, and will, and word of the truly Christian husband. The rule is absolute. Any Church which presumes to speak slightly of Christ and His Word, proclaims itself a false Church; so any wife who ventures to speak disparagingly of her husband's authority proclaims herself a rebellious and disobedient wife.

ii. But still it is a *gracious* rule. Every thing in God's Word has a gracious principle, and a gracious object and principle. Nothing is ordained by it, but for the welfare of those who obey as well as of those who rule. Now just as Christ first chooses His people freely, so they, by His grace, choose Him freely. They are "*willing in the day of His power.*" Their obedience is not the obedience of

slavery, but of liberty. His "*service is perfect freedom.*" So is it with the Christian wife. "Wives, submit yourselves *to your own husbands.*" Christ gave Himself to the Church, and for the Church. He is hers possessively, exactly as she is His. So is it with the wife. The husband whom she is to obey, is one who has given himself to her, and to her alone. He is "*her own husband.*" The obedience claimed and commanded is not that of an inferior being, as among the Heathen, nor as of one among a herd of slaves, each obeying for the favor of a common despot, as among the Mahomedans ; but the obedience of submission to one who is her own, by her own free choice ; who is, by the ordinance of God, part of herself. She submits, therefore, from a sense of personal interest, as well from a principle of personal duty ; just as the body is subservient to the soul, or the inclination to the judgment, for the common benefit and happiness of both. It is, therefore, a gracious rule, because it requires a submission of order and love, not of inferiority and servitude.

III. It is further a *reasonable* rule. "Submit yourselves unto your own husbands, *as unto the Lord.*" Now, as the Lord has but one sole object in *assuming* the rule over the Church, so the

Christian husband should have only one object in maintaining authority over the wife—that of her own good and the good of the household. It is reasonable that the Church should be subject to Christ, not only for her own benefit and blessing, but that she may be an example and blessing to others. And here we may remark, as a further proof of the reasonableness of this subjection, how graciously it is repaid by the good providence of God. If Christ's authority over the Church be absolute, yet it is confiding. He entrusts to His people, His name and glory, His fame and cause. To them He entrusts, in the way of obedience and dependence on His grace and spirit, the conversion of souls, the edification of saints, and the consolation of sufferers. This present delegated authority is the present exaltation and reward of His true and faithful Church. So it is with the wife. In submission to her husband, she gains increasingly his confidence. To her, he commits the care of children, and the regulation of the household; for she, in his absence, and in his place, is to "*guide the house.*"* In proportion as she supports his authority, she gains it for herself. As she honors him, she is honored; and the Lord's gracious word

* 1 Tim. v., 14.

supports her rule and authority, as well as her husband's, for it is written in the next chapter of this epistle, "Children obey your *parents* in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and *mother* ; which is the first commandment, with promise." O yes, it is a reasonable rule !

II. THE OBLIGATION TO THE CHRISTIAN WIFE'S SUBMISSION.

"*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church.*" This is the husband's *right*, and the *obligation* to submission arises from it. The example of the Lord Jesus is again quoted. Though He has given Himself to the Church, and has made Himself one with her, He has not thereby forfeited his right to the exercise of authority. He is still the head, and His province is therefore to direct and control the members of His body. So it is with the Christian husband. As it is unseemly for the Church to dispute with her Lord, so is it unseemly for the wife to wrangle and contend with her husband. Just as the Lord is grieved with the rebellion of an undutiful Church, so the Scriptures declare that "the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping." They grieve and vex the spirit of the husband ; they alienate his affections ; they destroy his comfort ; they are like

the rain dropping through the roof, spoiling and injuring every thing on which it falls. A contentious, disputatious wife not only rebels against the Word of the Lord, but publishes her own disgrace. She is guilty of as great folly as if the hand were to be lifted up to smite its own head, instead of obeying its dictates and direction.

The obligation being thus established in favor of the husband, the Word of God next discloses to the wife, as to a reasonable and responsible being, the *reason* for it; "*for He is the Saviour of the body.*" The Lord Jesus does not require or exact the submission of His people on an empty plea, an obscure or insufficient title. He has abundant claims to vindicate His pretensions and demands. He toiled for His Church; He suffered for it; He redeemed and saved it. And so is it, in measure, with the Christian husband. Just because the wife is the weaker vessel, and he is, therefore, enjoined to honor her, so is he also bound to labor for her, to protect, to counsel, to assist, uphold, and comfort her. And just for this reason should she submit herself to him, to whom she owes her support and subsistence, her safety, her protection, her readiest and most friendly counsel, her chief earthly consolation.

But here observe, my brethren, that while there is a cogent and conclusive reason for the submission of the wife, it forms a correspondingly urgent and imperative demand upon the exertion, the industry, and the sympathy of the husband. His position is that of the guardian, sustainer, supporter, and comforter of the wife. For a husband to oppress and tyrannize over his wife is a base and despicable thing; to see him live upon her labor is an unmanly sight. To depend, except when incapacitated by illness, upon her whom he ought to support is most unmanly. Let me, then, before quitting this part of the subject add a word of consolation to the Christian wife who has to contend against the bitter trial of an unkind, oppressive, or neglectful husband. Pray that the conscience of God's appointment may weigh down all difficulties. If the Lord has, in His inscrutable, yet all-wise Providence, laid a heavy burden upon you, He can yet, in His rich and abounding grace, sustain you under its load, and, in His full and ready sympathy, comfort you under its galling yoke. Look to the Lord Jesus for strength and succour, and in every case of painful obedience and submission, say to Him, in the words of the devout Archbishop Leighton—"Lord, I offer this to Thee, and for Thy sake I humbly bear it."

III. We have yet to consider THE EXCEPTION TO THE CHRISTIAN WIFE'S SUBMISSION.

The rule and obligation are both summed up in the concluding verse of our text; "*Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*" But in this it is taken for granted that the husband's authority be exercised after the manner of Christ's, and in obedience to Him. Every human duty is limited by the boundaries assigned to it in that Word which enjoins it. Even the obedience of children to parents, and subjects to sovereigns, is restricted to its legitimate precincts; "Children obey your parents *in the Lord*;" first, "fear God," then "honor the king." No sublunary duty can transgress the boundaries of the sanctuary; no inferior obligation can transcend the high commands of heaven; no child is permitted to "love father or mother more than Christ;" and when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were commanded to fall down and worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up, their firm but respectful answer to the king was, "O, Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter."* Even so is the wife commanded to submit herself "to her own

* Dan. iii., 16.

husband, *as unto the Lord.*" In things lawful she is to be "*subject in every thing;*" the Lord commands it, and it is for her good. In anything unlawful, which is clearly contrary to the expressed will of God, the obedience is not "as unto the Lord;" and the wife's answer must then be in the mild but decided language of the disciples, "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."*

But I notice this exception not only for its own sake, but also for a particular reason. Not unfrequently in the wisdom of God (though this conveys no sanction to the marriage of a truly religious woman to a careless or irreligious man) it seems good in His sight to give to the wife *more knowledge* in Divine truth than to the husband. He hides these things perhaps, from the man of care and worldly wisdom, and reveals them in greater power to the simple faith and childlike spirit of the wife. But we shall see that even here the special exemption to the implicit obedience of the wife, which may sometimes, and in some cases arise, rather tends to establish than to weaken the general rule. The Word of God has not neglected a case so often likely to occur in the history of the Church of Christ. The apostle

* Acts iv., 19.

Peter meets it and provides for it. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; *that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.*"* So that, even under this contingency, the wife's general subjection is enjoined; and that just in proportion to her obedience to the Lord, which is immediately afterwards alluded to.

Now, in commenting further upon this passage and its context, I would especially beseech your attention to the beautiful order and harmony of the Word of God. It has many voices to the children of men, but, like the music of a choir, they all blend in one sweet harmony and concert. There may be a leading voice, but every other strain chimes in with it as it rises and swells, without one single jar or discord. Thus the Christian wife is enjoined, as her first duty, to TRUST IN GOD, and to be well acquainted with the examples of holy matrons of old who did so; "for after this manner in the old time the holy women also, *who trusted in God*, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands." This is the leading voice. Another voice rises and blends with it, telling her that she is so to walk with God, as to be a living epistle of His

* 1 Peter iii., 1—5.

Word ; giving expression to all its exquisite proprieties, its lovely tones of self-control, of kindness, and of peace, "that if any obey not the word, they also may *without the word be won* by the conversation of the wives ; while they behold your chaste conversation, coupled with fear." The next voice tells her that these rich and resplendent graces are to be covered, softened, and subdued, with the veil of humility, gentleness, meekness and simplicity ; "whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning, of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." And here let me notice that there is one sweet pervading note which is common to each voice in the harmony, and breathes through them all. It is the note of *love towards the husband* ; for the point towards which all the other precepts are made to turn in the whole passage, is that the "*husband may be won by the wife.*" Before quitting this part of our subject it may be expected that some remark should be made on the concluding verse of this part of St. Peter's address to wives, as it is a passage of acknowledged obscurity. The apostle closes his admonition with these words,

“Even as Sarah also obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, whose daughters we are as long as we do well, *and are not afraid with any amazement.*” My own view of this passage is, that it owes its obscurity only to the great tenderness and loving kindness of the spirit of the Gospel. The promise of the new covenant, in Christ Jesus, to all His servants, is, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”* His precious blood was shed not only for His people which should yet be born, but “*for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first covenant.*”† You will find accordingly, as has frequently been pointed out to you by the loving lips of your venerable pastor,‡ that the New Testament writers, in mentioning the Old Testament saints, invariably pass by their failings, and record only their faith. The Spirit of God forgets their transgressions, but remembers their graces. Hence this obscure and delicate allusion to Sarah. On two memorable instances, at the instigation of her husband, and in participation with his fears, she had been induced, not by an open and direct falsehood, but by the suppression of the truth, to deny her relation to him as his wife. This was, I believe, *her* fear with amazement; and this, to my own mind

* *Hebrews viii.*, 12. † *Hebrews ix.*, 15. ‡ Rev. Dr. Marsh.

at least, accounts for the expression — “whose daughters ye are *so long as ye are not afraid with any amazement.*”

I would, then, more especially address those wives who are placed between apparently conflicting duties to the Lord and to their husbands. Let me affectionately say to any such, that while you are bound to God to avoid compliances with any thing contrary to His revealed Word, on the one hand, you are equally bound to avoid a spirit of independence and spiritual pride on the other. The Word, of God gives you no countenance in a domineering superiority or factious opposition. It enjoins you, while you are to avoid such compliances as would estrange your own souls from Him, to make every other possible concession to win your husbands to Christ. Christian wives, be faithful ^{to} yourselves, and remember that no opposition to your husbands is permitted, except when compulsory from obedience to Christ. If, therefore, conscience, in the retrospect, presents you with the memory of seasons of dispute and altercation, of opposition and contention, God permits you to deduct from the painful account every instance in which, from simple obedience to Christ, you have come into collision with your husbands, but the remaining balance is your

own sin. If conscience be faithful and memory true, you may be surprised, on careful scrutiny, to find the deduction so small.

A practical case occurs to me which it may be well to mention. Occasionally it happens that the wife is not only in advance of her husband in religious knowledge, but also surpasses him in vigor of intellect and decision of character. Here she has two sets of duties to perform, which require much watchful circumspection and delicacy of management: the first with reference to strangers; the other with respect to children, servants, and inmates of the household.

With regard to strangers. Her duty is to support the character, and uphold the rightful authority of her husband as head of the house. There will be a constant temptation to display her superiority; but should she give way to it, she will inevitably herself suffer in public estimation. Every want of deference to her husband will, in reality, sink and lower herself. I knew a family, many years since, where an exceedingly weak husband was entirely upheld in his position in society by the wisdom, the respect, the excellence of his wife. The result was that he was respected for her sake; while the *universal tribute of praise, honor, and esteem* paid to

her exemplary conduct and admirable self-devotion was great indeed.

And next *with reference to children and servants*. When the husband from weakness of character is unable so to take the control of the household as to maintain order and discipline for God, it is incumbent on the wife, while she still is bound to honor her husband, to seek with much watchfulness, wisdom, and prayer to supply his lack of service. Children are bound to honor a mother as well as a father; servants to obey a mistress as well as a master; and where the husband and master have not the moral force to exact it, it is the duty of the mistress and mother to do so, both from obedience to God, and for the welfare of children and servants, which is always inseparable from their subjection to those placed over them. For want of knowing and following this, many a widow has been left with unruly children and unmanageable servants. I knew another family where both husband and wife truly feared the Lord, but where the husband wanted firmness and decision to correct the children and maintain authority. The wife possessed the requisite decision, and exercised it in a spirit of love, wisdom, and prayer. Her husband was taken to his rest, and she was left with affectionate and

obedient, and not unruly children ; and in another and a better world, children and children's children will, I trust, rise up and call her blessed.

But, though I have alluded to such cases, they are comparatively rare. The main stress of Scriptural precept with reference to wives is laid upon strictly feminine graces. A woman's chief temptations are, like those of Eve, to self-sufficiency and independence, especially where her understanding is flattered, and her senses, generally so acute, are pleased and captivated. Her safety is in obedience. Her chief and most befitting sphere is her home affections. Her brightest ornament is a meek and quiet spirit. Her wisdom, her blessedness, and her glory are a close walking with Christ, and a simple acquiescence in His Word. May God, the Holy Spirit, convince us all of sin, and lead us all to the Lord Jesus for wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

SERMON III.



ON THE DUTIES OF SERVANTS.

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ON THE DUTIES OF SERVANTS.

TITUS ii., 9 10.

“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again: not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”

THE Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ennobles every one who receives it; and all who despise it, however exalted in station, will one day be lightly esteemed. It promises “glory, honor, immortality, eternal life” to the humblest follower of the Lamb, and not only brands with crime and guilt the rejectors of God’s salvation, but with that which to many a proud spirit would be more intolerable and revolting—even with “shame and everlasting contempt.”

The inequalities of human life are inevitable. In

any possible form and condition of society some must serve. It is the religion of the Bible alone which has made service compatible with honor and happiness, by not only supplying motives of contentment, but dignifying the work with marks of Divine favor, and setting before the Christian servant the sure promise of future glory.

Let me then lead you to consider :—

I. THE HONORABLE DISTINCTION CONFERRED UPON THE OFFICE OF A SERVANT IN THE SCRIPTURES GENERALLY ;

II. THE SUBLIME MOTIVE TO SERVANTS SUPPLIED BY OUR TEXT ;

III. THE POSITIVE DUTIES ENJOINED ;

IV. THE TEMPTATIONS TO BE AVOIDED ; and may the God of all grace bless the subject to every heart.

I. THE HONORABLE DISTINCTION CONFERRED UPON THE OFFICE OF A SERVANT IN THE SCRIPTURES GENERALLY.

Servants little know how much they are indebted to the Bible. It is the servant's true and only CHARTER. Some men talk of the ancient republics as nurseries of freedom ; but the real condition of servants under them was indescribably wretched. *The very word*—servant—signified a slave.

In Greece, a servant was defined by Aristotle as a "living working tool or possession." In Athens, a Greek writer records, that there were, in the year 309 B.C., 21,000 free citizens, and 400,000 slaves! In Corinth, there were 460,000 slaves! The poorest Athenian citizen had one. They could be given and taken as pledges; they could be pawned to a broker, like a bed or a blanket. They were not believed upon oath, and, horrible to relate, their evidence was taken, in courts of justice, by torture.

In Rome, a slave could not contract marriage, and though he might acquire, yet he could not legally possess, property. About the time of our Lord's birth, one Roman master,* who had fallen into difficulties, is yet mentioned by a cotemporary writer, as leaving, at his death, 4116 slaves. There were not only private but public slaves belonging to the state. Slave dealers accompanied the armies, for the purchase of captives. On one occasion, after a victory, many thousands are mentioned as being sold at the rate of about three shillings and sixpence each; and, under the empire, even medical men, when taken prisoners, were sold as slaves at the rate of about sixty guineas each.

Let us turn from these fearful scenes of human

* A freedman of Augustus.

misery to the Word of God, and what a contrast awaits our eyes ! The first servant whom we find specially mentioned in the Bible was Eliezer of Damascus, the steward of faithful Abraham, who was plainly intended, before the birth of Ishmael and Isaac, to be his heir; for "Abram said, Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus; and Abram said, to me, Thou hast given no seed; and lo, one born in my house is mine heir."*

Shortly afterwards another servant is brought prominently before us—for when Rebekah consented to depart from Mesopotamia, to go and be the wife of Isaac, we read that she did not set out alone, but that her *nurse* went with her—for "they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men."† And we mention this fact because the Word of God notices more of this excellent woman. She appears to have remained with the family of her new master Isaac, for, at least, a hundred years, and after Rebekah's death to have attached herself to Jacob; and the Holy Spirit has recorded an affecting allusion to her death, for when Jacob came to Bethel, and had built an altar to the Lord, we read of the

* Genesis xv., 2, 3.

† Genesis xxiv., 59.

following interruption to his joy—"But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Bethel, under an oak; and the name of it was called Allon-baccuth"—*i. e.*, the oak of weeping!

Then we have the law so full of humanity concerning Hebrew servants, in the twenty-first chapter of Exodus, from which we learn that female servants were even sometimes taken into the family of their masters—as in the ninth verse, "And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters."

But there are two notices of servants, in the Old and New Testaments respectively, which are peculiarly touching and interesting, as demonstrating the favorable regard extended towards them by our gracious, all-seeing God. The Old Testament notice to which I allude will be found in the thirty-ninth chapter of the prophet Jeremiah. We read in the sixth and seventh verses, the fearful doom of the unbelieving king of Judah, for "the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah; also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah; moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon." But we turn from this righteous judgment of God upon a rebellious and ungodly sovereign,

to the gracious message recorded as sent to a believing servant, in the sixteenth verse—"Go and speak to Ebed-malech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel, Behold I will bring my words upon this city for evil and not for good, and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee. But I will deliver thee in that day saith the Lord ; and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee ; *because thou hast put thy trust in Me* saith the Lord." In the New Testament again we find one whole epistle addressed to Philemon, a Christian master, and devoted to the subject of Onesimus, a fugitive Christian slave, who, after his conversion by the ministry of the apostle Paul, ~~was~~ returning to his master.

It is, then, the Lord and the Lord's Word ~~only~~ which has put honor on the office of a servant. That blessed Word sent the first message of hope and comfort to the heart of the servant, bidding him to look to a master in heaven and to a kingdom in heaven. That Master tells you that He can exalt you thither, and that He can make you kings and ~~priests~~ unto God for ever, and points you to that

blessed day when every yoke shall be broken, and every man shall receive according to that which he hath done in the body, "for there is no respect of persons with God." Hence let us notice

II. THE SUBLIME MOTIVE SUPPLIED TO SERVANTS IN OUR TEXT.

The motive is, "that they may *adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour." As we have said there is no class of persons in the world more beholden to the Scriptures generally than servants, and more especially to the spirit and precepts of the New Testament. One of our blessed Lord's most striking miracles of healing was wrought upon the servant of the pious centurion; and the epistles abound with precepts concerning them. Let it be remembered also, that slavery in our own colonies owes its abolition not to philosophers and philanthropists, but to Christian men—to Wilberforce, to Clarkson, and to Buxton. And so a debt of gratitude is due from servants to the doctrine of God our Saviour.

But God does not here appeal to you, in the way of motive, so much in setting before you a debt of gratitude, as in exciting you to the attainment of the highest honor. To throw a wreath of glory around the head of a triumphant conqueror is the prerogative of a sovereign; but we behold our gra-

cious God and Saviour committing to you the enviable and inestimable dignity of adorning His doctrine—of winning men to love and admire and submit to it, and to esteem and account it good—of shewing, even to proud and selfish men, that when the Scriptures honor a faithful and Christian servant, and bestow a dignity upon his office in the sight of God, it has done well for mankind, and deserved well of society—of shewing men that you love the Lord Jesus, who has so loved you, and that, in doing His will, and seeking His glory, your walk and conversation are good and pleasant to behold. O think of the unbounded sublimity of the motive of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour!

Let us proceed to

III. THE POSITIVE DUTIES ENJOINED ON SERVANTS.

We now come to the *mode* of adorning Christ's holy doctrine. Man's pride is constantly shewing itself by wishing to do great things. God teaches us humility by pointing us continually to little things, as if He were saying "Do these, and great things shall follow." The smallest wheels must be prepared, and the finest springs must be tempered and shaped with the most exact and minute precision *before the watch comes forth from the hands of the*

maker. The most delicate touches and finest strokes of the brush must be finished in before the picture is completed. The smallest fibres of the root must strike into the soil and be supplied with moisture before the stately oak rears itself from the sapling. Without self-control, and a desire to make others happy, the Christian is nothing; and these are the very duties which are enjoined upon servants. "*Servants be obedient to your own masters*"—here is self-control. "*Please them well in all things*"—here is the exercise of the desire to make others happy. These are the little and apparently insignificant duties from which great results will follow.

Obedience to masters is inculcated, in the strongest possible terms, in Holy Writ;—to all masters, however unreasonable, and in all cases, sin only excepted. This is enjoined *for the Lord's sake*—“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward, for this is thankworthy if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving

us an example that we should follow His steps ; who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth ; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously."* And obedience is no less desirable *for your own sakes*. Nothing so much trains and disciplines the character for future honor, as a course of strict and self-denying obedience. What an example of the benefit of self-denying obedience was Joseph !—so faithful and devoted as to resist a temptation of the most subtle and alluring kind. He suffered severely, but his long-tried obedience to God was rewarded by his advancement to be lord over all Egypt.

Servants are always commanded *to please their masters well in all things*. Servants may contribute incalculably to the happiness of masters, because their opportunities are so constant and so various. What a beautiful instance of this earnest desire for the happiness of the household in which she served, was the little maid of Israel, who was carried captive by the Syrians, and waited upon Naaman's wife ! Torn from her parents and her happy home, far from her native glen, separated

* 1 Peter ii., 18—23.

from her kindred and from the house of her God, she yet thinks of her heathen master's suffering, and earnestly desires his restoration and his welfare! And how great and abundant was her reward! Christian servants, you too may be the means of leading a thoughtless master to the knowledge of Christ; and even, if influence over the parent is denied you, how much is in your power with reference to the children of a household, who are so often entrusted to your care!

IV. Let me entreat you to consider THE TEMPTATIONS TO BE AVOIDED.

"Not answering again," not cavilling, and objecting, and hesitating at what you are told to do; not neglecting your work, not repining at it, not putting it off upon others. Giving way to this temptation may appear to you a light thing, but God notices it—it is sin against God.

"Not purloining"—i. e., setting apart any portion of your master's property for yourselves, *"but shewing all good fidelity."* There is a great temptation to servants to give way to this practice of purloining, especially in large households; but the habit is not only injurious to masters, but imminently dangerous to yourselves. God's eye sees

you, and you provoke Him to anger, while you tempt Satan to tempt you. Judas began by purloining, and he ended by being accessory to the murder of his Master, and by hanging himself. What a noble example, on the other hand, of "all good fidelity" was Eliezer of Damascus, Abraham's servant, to whom we have already alluded in this discourse! What earnest hearty pains to secure his master's interest and happiness in the journey to Mesopotamia, and that, remember, though the birth and existence of Isaac was the crowning death-blow to all his own prospects of self-aggrandisement. The Spirit of God has honored his fidelity by devoting a whole chapter, the twenty-fourth of Genesis, to the imperishable record of his prayerful, self-renouncing, heartfelt faithfulness!

Let me entreat you, in conclusion, to observe—

1. That to be *good* servants to man, you must be true servants to our Lord Jesus Christ. The only motive set before you by the apostle in our text, and the only practically sufficient motive is, that you may "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." I have endeavoured to shew you how much you owe in this world to the Lord Jesus, but how much more for eternity! For your sakes, He took

upon Him the form of a servant—for your sakes, He washed His disciples' feet—for your sakes, He endured and died. Without Him, you perish.

II. Remember also that to be *happy* servants to man, you must give yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this enlisting under His banner, and enrolling yourselves in His service alone which puts honor upon your condition. Unless you know that you are serving Christ, you may be tempted to discontent and despondency; but if you feel that you are doing His will and fulfilling His desire who did every thing for you, every service will be light and sweet, and the otherwise heavy yoke will be made easy and pleasant.

III. Lastly, look to and pray for the Holy Spirit to teach, sanctify, comfort, and bless you. Remember that God's eye is over you, and that if you seek and serve Him, though you should be unrequited by man, He who seeth in secret will reward you openly. Remember, also, that you cannot be unobserved by those around you, and that, however you may be apparently disregarded, you cannot but exercise an influence for good or for evil upon others. Your temper, your words, your actions will all be noticed by, and have their effect upon, the children of your employers, and upon your fellow-servants. Your

example may lead others to heaven or hell. O, then, seek, like Moses of old, to have respect unto the recompense of the reward, and so to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, and think often upon the words which await every Christian and faithful servant of the Saviour, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a *few* things, be thou ruler over *many* things, ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD."

SERMON IV.

ON THE DUTIES OF MASTERS.

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ON THE DUTIES OF MASTERS.

EPHES. vi., 9.

“And ye masters do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there any respect of persons with him.”

WE have lately had occasion, in treating of the Duties of Servants, to dwell on the miserable condition of that class of society in the heathen world; where a slave was defined by Aristotle to be “a living working tool or possession;” a servant could not marry, or legally possess property; he was not believed upon oath, and his evidence taken in so-called courts of justice, by torture.

But if the condition of the servant were thus pitiable and degraded, what a retributive reaction must have been exercised upon the master! What a dread of open insurrection or secret revenge before

his mind ! What a legion of evil passions working in his breast ! Surely barbarous cruelty, savage ferocity and ungoverned lusts, must equally have degraded the nature and disturbed the heart of such a petty despot, sapping the foundations of tranquility, and drying up the springs of repose and enjoyment within his soul.

It was reserved for the Holy Scriptures, the blessed message of love and peace, from a God of Holiness to sinful man, to demolish this structure of ferocity and fear, of tyranny and hatred, of mutual distrust and mutual corruption ; to restore the groundwork of order, confidence and humanity, and to erect upon this foundation an edifice of domestic security and serenity, trust and harmony, mutual benevolence and benefit. In elucidating the subject before us, let us consider,

I. THE PARENTAL CHARACTER GIVEN IN THE SCRIPTURES TO MASTERS OF FAMILIES.

II. THE PARTICULAR DUTIES OF MASTERS, FLOWING FROM THIS CHARACTER, AND ENJOINED IN OUR TEXT.

I. THE PARENTAL CHARACTER GIVEN IN THE SCRIPTURES TO MASTERS OF FAMILIES.

As Adam our first father was, through the fall, the federal head of death and sin to the human race,

from whom all the streams of misery and woe have descended, so that in the emphatic words of the Apostle, "*in Adam all die*,"—so Abraham, the father of the faithful, who was commanded to come out from his country and his kindred and "walk before God, and be perfect," who saw Christ's day, rejoiced in it and was glad, is, through the promise given to his spiritual children in the Lord Jesus, the father of all who believe; and in him, therefore, we shall find, as we might expect, the rudiments and elements of all the domestic duties and blessings. These were afterwards more fully developed in his posterity, in the line of Isaac and Jacob, whose training and education, as a nation was typical and instructive for the ensample and direction of God's people to the end.

Now one of the most salient and striking features in the early history of Abraham, in contrast with the current of profane history, is the prominence and consideration given to his servant, Eliezer of Damascus, arising from the appointed circumstance of his having for so long a period no child of his own. "I go childless, and lo, one born in my house is mine heir."*

Upon what principles Abraham had acted in the

* Genesis xv., 3.

training of such a servant, may be gathered from the commendation bestowed upon him in Genesis, xviii, 17—19, “And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do : seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him that he will command his children *and his household* after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.” The blessing which, accrued to his servant, from these principles, may be inferred from their admission into the privileges of God’s everlasting covenant revealed to us in Genesis, xviii, 13, where the Lord said, “he that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.” And the blessing and benefit which reverted and recoiled back upon Abraham, from the exercise of these principles, are exhibited to us at length in the whole of the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis, a chapter which portrays one of the most beautiful pictures of the inward and outward workings of domestic fidelity which language can afford, on the part of this same servant Eliezer, who

went in search of the desired wife for Isaac his master's son,—that son whom he so loved and honored as to absorb every feeling of regret or jealousy at the destruction of his own prospects of distinction as the former presumptive heir to his master's great possessions.

Not to detain you by special references to the Jewish laws, which provided, among other things, for the possible intermarriage between masters and servants, it may be sufficient to observe that the training of Joseph, as a bondsman in Egypt, preparatory to his exaltation as governor of the country, and of the children of Israel, as a nation in their cruel bondage to Pharoah, were an admirable tutelage and preparation for the exercise, on the part of God's ancient people, of a mild and considerate sway over domestic servants—a characteristic which still strongly marks their scattered descendants in their wanderings. One of the many sins which are recorded as having led to their captivity in Babylon was the oppression of servants, whom they refused to liberate at the year of release, to which allusion is made in the writings of the prophets.

And the Lord has a similar dealing with truly Christian masters now and among ourselves. When a man in the middle or upper classes of society is

constrained to break loose from former habits, and is called to follow Christ, he is soon made to feel the yoke which he is about to relinquish. He has many a struggle to encounter in throwing off the bondage of the world, many a painful effort to make before he can cast off the chains of servitude to the maxims and opinions of associates and companions and rejoices in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free. And this experience of the galling yoke of the world and sin, this struggle to obtain release from their thralldom and to obtain the sweet enjoyment of the mild yoke of the Lord Jesus, subdues and softens his spirit, and fits him for the exercise of an intelligent and considerate, a moderate and compassionate, a gentle and sympathising control over the servants of his household.

II. THE PARTICULAR DUTIES FLOWING FROM THIS PARENTAL CHARACTER OF MASTERS ENJOINED BY OUR TEXT.

“And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with Him;” in which are presented to us, the points of correspondence in the apparently opposing duties of masters and servants; the consequent moderation enjoined upon the masters; the example

of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and the ultimate tribunal to which the conduct of masters of households shall be referred.

· I. THE POINTS OF CORRESPONDENCE in the apparently opposing and contradictory duties of masters and servants—"And ye masters do the *same things* unto them." In the economy of God every duty has its counterpart of claim upon those towards whom it is performed. Just as the members are set in the body for the mutual help and benefit of all, so are the members in the Christian society. It is Christ's will there should be no schism in the body, but a mutual care of one member for another, knowing that if one member suffer the others must suffer with it. Now, let us transfer this thought to the relation of masters and servants one to the other. Servants had been commanded, in the fifth verse of our chapter, to "obey their masters, with fear and trembling, *in singleness of heart, as unto Christ ;*" that is, to *make conscience* of obedience, even so should masters then *make conscience* of their requirements, exacting nothing from servants but what they believe, in the sight of God, to be just, and right, and reasonable. In verse sixth, again, servants are enjoined to obey "*not with eye service, as menpleasers ; but as the ser-*

vants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." Surely, here is a corresponding duty enjoined upon masters; in their conduct towards servants, they are not to regard the frown or the reproach of men, not to follow the example or fashion of the world, not to be content with the regular payment of wages, or the occasional addition of a trifling gratuitous reward, but to consider that, with reference to every servant under their roof, they are charged with a great moral obligation, a positive Christian duty, in the sight of God, towards an immortal and responsible fellow-being, brought, in the order of Providence, under their influence. I must, in fact, remember, if I be a master, that my servant will naturally take much of his tone and temper from me, and that this tone and temper will extend itself, in a thousand ways, to promote the welfare or the detriment, the happiness or misery of those around him. In verse seventh the servant is desired to perform his service "*with good will*, as to the Lord and not to men." Now, here we have a point of duty in which it is easy to bring home conviction to the minds of heads of families. We naturally expect a servant who becomes an inmate of our house to pay regard to our property and *character*. The disappointment we express when

either is injured or neglected is a proof that we look for such a feeling of regard and concern and interest—for such “*good will*.” But all this implies a *reciprocity* of duty, a compensating and corresponding regard. Servants cannot feel a regard for our property, character, or comfort, unless we manifest the same to them. We complain of their dishonesty, heartlessness, want of attachment; but are we not looking for an effect without a cause? Are we concerned for their interests, temporal and eternal? Solicitous for the formation and improvement of their characters? Are we, in short, seeking their welfare in all things, “*with good will, as unto the Lord?*” If not, how can we complain?

Further, masters have a duty of MODERATION consequent upon this mutuality and reciprocity of domestic relation to their servants, “*forbearing*” or moderating “*threatening*.” And here again God has interwoven in the domestic constitution a web of compensation or retribution, which cannot be escaped or avoided. While genuine kindness must, in the main, soften and attach, unseemly petulance or undue harshness will speedily and inevitably be retaliated upon ourselves. An exasperated servant cannot be expected to be careful of our property; a servant smarting under a sense of

wrong to be kind to his fellow-servants; and all the household arrangements will be sure to suffer from the tendency to wrath, and bickering, and discontent thus excited. Moreover, and this is the tenderest point of all to ourselves, our children, who must more or less be committed to their care and sympathy, will be constantly exposed to the outbreaks of their anger and impatience, and to all the contaminating and injurious influences of an atmosphere of discord, petulance, and ill will.

Again, and this is a solemn consideration, masters have a duty towards their servants arising from the EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST—"Knowing that your Master also is in heaven"—and what a Master! O, my brethren, here is an appeal to your hearts indeed! For how did He comport Himself towards His servants when he was upon earth? How does He still conduct Himself towards you? O, He cared for them—He made Himself a party in all their concerns—He took an interest in all their interests, however minute and apparently unworthy of His regard—He watched sedulously, diligently, tenderly over their characters and conduct—He cast Himself on their sympathies—He prayed with them—He prayed for them. He *does so, or is ready to do so still with you!* And

how is it between you and your servants, my brethren ? Can your servants consult you freely in their difficulties and perplexities ? Can they come to you, in seasons of trial, and say, " Master, teach us to pray ?" And can you look to them in the hour of your own sorrow and trial, as the Lord Jesus in the garden, to watch with you and pray with you that the cup may pass from you ? Are you even following the example of the centurion when they are sick ? " My servant is sick ; Lord, come and heal him."

Lastly, masters, have a duty enjoined upon them towards servants in the constant remembrance of the **ULTIMATE TRIBUNAL** before which both shall stand ; "*neither is there respect of persons with Him,*" in which, by a comparison of the expression with the parallel passage, in the third chapter of the Colossians, twenty-third to twenty-fifth verses, there is an evident allusion to the great judgment-day. There is a mutual account then to be rendered, and the neglectful master and the unfaithful servant will each " receive for the wrong that he hath done, and there is no respect of persons."

To sum up the whole subject by a few practical considerations :—

First : Let us remember that the **DOMESTIC**

CONSTITUTION is the groundwork and foundation of all civil, political, and religious society. Every thing depends upon it—hence God has bestowed upon it such paramount importance. The prosperity of our country, the fate of our children, the extension of the Church, and the spread of Divine Truth, depend, instrumentally, upon husbands, and parents, and masters. Surely, we have all need of much self-humiliation and much amendment, much teachableness of spirit, much study of God's Word, much earnest seeking for His grace and guidance. We complain of abuses moral and political, but we do not look at home.

Secondly: Let masters of families not be discouraged with reference to servants. They are made in the same mould, and are possessed of the same feelings, with yourselves. They are never worse, relatively, than other classes around them. They are susceptible of the same feelings of attachment as you entertain and manifest towards them. I know one Christian master who was followed upwards of ninety miles, under a tropical sun, by a faithful servant on foot, on one occasion of deep domestic distress, and no remonstrance or entreaty *could prevail* on him to remain behind. I know *another instance* of a faithful servant who, after



having shared the hardships and dangers of his master's captivity at Cabool, insisted upon following him to England; and would even take delight in laying out some disposable portion of his little property in purchasing some token of his attachment, which he would press upon that beloved master's unwilling acceptance. I know a third instance of an English servant, many years in a pious family, who, when her honored and excellent master fell into unexpected difficulties, insisted on devoting a considerable sum of her savings to aid in refurnishing the noble hall which is the family residence. Dear brethren, there is a cementing power in united prayer—there is a hallowing and love-diffusing influence in real, deep, practical family religion, which will extend from the heart of the master to the heart of the servant, and will attach them to each other in an enduring and everlasting bond.

Thirdly: Let masters of families take heed of neglect. Many a master sets more value upon his stud than upon his servants. Kindness to and care of animals, when proceeding from right principles, is a Christian duty, for "the merciful man regardeth the life of his beast." But let servants see that the brutes that perish have more of your care and sym-

pathy than themselves, that you can part with an old and tried servant with less feeling than with a horse or a dog, and insulted humanity will be ready to take revenge when opportunity offers. I believe that Chartism is more rife, in proportion to the number of the lower orders in this pleasure-seeking town, where family duties are so frequently neglected, and the tie between masters and servants so readily dissolved, than in many of our crowded manufacturing districts. I was lately informed by a most respectable tradesman, that the infamous Chartist petition of last year received many hundreds of signatures in Leamington, the majority of which were, he believed, obtained by gentlemen's servants. I walked through several parts of the town on the critical night in April when the fate of London seemed uncertain, and shall not soon forget the tone and remarks of some of the groups of working-men assembled in our streets. Neither shall I readily forget an incident of the following day, when be it remembered, the failure of the Chartist movement was not generally known. Meeting two disorderly young men in one of our streets, I stopped them and spoke to them on the subject of religion, when one of them shewed me a pistol, saying, "*That* is my religion;" and I felt convinced, from their



bearing and manner, that, had occasion served, he was prepared to use it.

Lastly: Let us all remember what we owe in personal security and domestic happiness to the prevalence, however partial and imperfect, of the light of the Gospel amongst us. Let us go to our Master in heaven, even to the Lord Jesus Christ, for understanding and wisdom to know our responsibilities and comprehend our duties; and for both grace and wisdom to discharge them rightly. A sense of His love, who died for us unworthy servants, of his forbearance and merciful loving kindness amidst all our manifold provocations, will alone make us wise and conscientious and considerate masters. For how can we teach servants their duty when we are ignorant of our own? How can we pray for them while we know not how to pray for ourselves? "If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Without Him, we can do nothing. Without His Spirit to renew, and teach, and sanctify, and comfort us, how shall we be able to stand before Him in the judgment-day?

SERMON V.



ON THE DUTIES OF PARENTS.

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ON THE DUTIES OF PARENTS.

GENESIS xxii., 16—18.

“ By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son : that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore ; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed My voice.”

IN discoursing on the Duties of Masters and Servants, we have been led to contrast the fearful condition of wretched thralldom and brutal despotism which characterised these relations among the heathen, with the real honor, and considerate and careful kindness enjoined and imparted to them in the blessed Book of God ; and we found the first

illustrious examples of humanity and attachment in the history of faithful Abraham. The second lesson in the service of this evening directs our attention to the same honored and venerable patriarch in the parental relation—a relation which received its crowning dignity in the person of Abraham at so early a stage in the history of the world—and which, after the lapse of 3800 years, and running through the whole of the Mosaic and so many centuries of the Christian dispensations, still centres in Abraham, as the common and spiritual father, under Christ, of both Jews and Gentiles. The very name of Abraham signifies “the *father* of a great multitude.”* When the Lord revealed Himself to Moses in the bush, as Jehovah, it was as the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob—that is, as the God of a *father* and his children. The Jews, in our Lord’s time, made it their boast that Abraham was their *father*, and our Lord acknowledges the literal validity of their claim, in replying, “I know that ye are Abraham’s seed.”† The apostle to the Gentiles, in the Epistle to the Romans, calls the same patriarch, “the father of us all.”‡ And again, in the Epistle to the Galatians, he writes, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed.”§

* *Gen. xvii., 5, marg.* † *John viii., 37.* ‡ *Rom. iv., 16.* § *Gal. iii., 29.*

I make these references not simply to exalt the character of Abraham to its due position, but to draw your minds to a great fact deducible from them all—the fact that all the servants of God from Abraham downwards, kings, prophets, priests, apostles, evangelists, and martyrs, are reduced to the simple standing of *children* receiving blessing through one common *father*. And this fact alone would be amply sufficient to encircle the parental authority with a lustre of no common brightness. But we shall find, I trust, much more, in the course of our meditation, to enforce upon our minds a lofty estimate of the importance and dignity of the parental relation. Let me then—

I. Call your attention briefly to the PROMINENCE GIVEN TO THE OFFICE OF A PARENT IN GOD'S HOLY WORD ;

II. Direct your minds to the PRIMARY PRINCIPLE OF PARENTAL DUTY, AND THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF PARENTAL BLESSING DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT ;

III. Shew from the Scriptures SOME OF THE LEADING BRANCHES OF PARENTAL DUTY.

I. I am to call your attention to the PROMINENCE GIVEN TO THE PARENTAL OFFICE IN GOD'S HOLY WORD.

* The family is the first cause or foundation of all human society, moral, political, and religious. There can be no real, complete, or permanent improvement in church and state, without family improvement. Proud, wicked, discontented, and deluded men clamour for revolutions, and even wise and amiable men after the flesh are impatient for hasty and ill-digested reforms; but let parents neglect their duties and nothing can go right—the generation to come will still be stubborn and rebellious, unruly and untoward, “the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” But let parents, in all classes, fulfil their duties as in the sight of God, and according to the Word of God, and a sound and healthy condition of the body politic will speedily ensue.

God’s Word speaks much, and loudly, and forcibly on this point. We have already touched on the bearing of its language, in reference to the general standing given to Abraham, as the father of the faithful, and we shall find the Book of God maintaining the same tone consistently throughout its course.

Hear, for instance, the solemn and heartstirring farewell exhortation of Moses, the man of God, as

* Anderson on the Domestic Constitution—Passion.

recorded in the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy—
“Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding *in the sight of the nations* which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For *what nation is there so great*, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?”—“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes hath seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; *but teach them thy sons and thy son’s sons*; specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather Me the people together, and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, *and that they may teach their children.*”*
Hear, again, the words of the psalmist, “I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old; which we have heard and known, *and our fathers have told us.* We will not hide them from

* Deut. iv., 9, 10.

*their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord and His strength, and His wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children : that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born ; who shall arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.”** In these two remarkable passages, national prosperity and exaltation, and national religion are made exclusively to hang and depend on PARENTAL influence and instruction. The wise man implies the same lesson, when he says, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother ; for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.”† And the royal Hezekiah, when recording the outpouring of his soul after being raised from the bed of languishing, uses this emphatic language, “*The father to the children shall make known Thy truth..‡*”

But there are two remarkable passages on this subject in the prophet Malachi, the last Jewish

* Psalm lxxviii., 2—7. † Pro. i., 8, 9. ‡ Isaiah xxxviii., 19.

prophet—one of which echoes back the voice of Moses, their first national prophet, even till, in the long distance, it reaches to man's creation in paradise—the other repeating it and sending it forward till the coming of the Messiah, and, through His dispensation, to the end of time. The first passage to which I allude refers to the primordial institution of marriage in the time of man's innocence, "And did He not make one? Yet had He the residue of the Spirit;" and then, as if the prophet would lead us to the purpose of God in the marriage constitution, in the establishment of PARENTAL INFLUENCES, he adds, "And wherefore one? *That He might seek a goodly seed.*"* The second remarkable passage in this prophet refers to the decay and corruption of religion among the Jews; warns them lest their own polity should be broken up, and close in blood and judgment; and significantly points them to the only remedy. For how was the Lord's messenger to prepare His way? How are the Messiah's people to be made ready for Him? How are they to escape the desolating curse of an offended God?† "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of *the fathers to the children,*

* Malachi ii., 15.

† Anderson on the Domestic Constitution.

and the heart of the children to their fathers, *lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*"* With this loud cry to the heart of parents, and I know no appeal that could possibly be more arousing, Old Testament prophecy expires, and resigns its charge to John the Baptist.

And as the Old Testament thus closes with God's solemn note of warning against the unnatural negligence of parental duty, so the New Testament opens with His most benignant smiles on parental care and love. Viewed in this connexion, the whole New Testament history is one sweet expanded smile of our gracious God, beaming upon parental faithfulness and family religion. The family is especially His own ordinance of love for the good of man, and for the blessing of the whole earth. It received its first blessing from God in paradise; and its crowning blessing in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall restore paradise again. For upon whom did the first ray of Gospel grace alight as recorded by St. Luke? "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. *And they were both righteous begore God, walking*

* Malachi iv., 5, 6.

in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."* These were the honored parents of John the Baptist. And when the light had thus brightly dawned upon the family religion of Zacharias and Elizabeth, upon whom did it next pour its full flood of radiant blessing? O, it was upon another FAMILY—even upon holy Mary, whose soul did "magnify the Lord, and whose spirit did "rejoice in God her Saviour;" and upon gracious, consistent Joseph, so just and upright, who loved mercy and walked so humbly with his God!† The whole of the opening of St. Luke's gospel is one glowing, touching picture of the Divine blessing on family religion, and that parent's heart must be cold indeed which is not warmed with gratitude and animated with holy zeal in reading it.

But, as we proceed in the New Testament history, we shall find that not only is parental piety honored in the cases of the family of John the Baptist and that of the Lord Jesus, but that God's free electing love delights to choose for itself, and fill to overflowing the same happy channel.‡ Of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, no fewer than eight seem to have been chosen out of three families. Peter and Andrew were children of the same parents, and

* Luke i., 5, 6.

† Luke i., 27.

‡ Anderson.

surely there may be something implied with reference to the piety of their father, when our Lord, on two remarkable occasions, addresses Peter as the "son of Jonas"—once when He would commend him for that wonderful confession of His Messiahship, in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew, "Blessed art thou Simon, son of Jonas"—and again, when he would gently chide him for his denial, and incite him to grateful ardour for his forgiveness and restoration, "Simon, *son of Judas*, lovest thou Me?" The next two brothers among the twelve were James and John, the sons of Zebedee and of Salome—a woman who accompanied Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus to Calvary, and supported her during the agonies of the cross—she to whom He appeared after His resurrection, before He shewed Himself to her favored sons, the one of whom was especially "the disciple whom He loved." It seems plain also, from a careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture, that no less than four others of the apostles, viz., James and Jude, Simon and Matthew, were the children of two parents, Cleopas and Mary. This Mary was nearly related to the mother of our blessed Lord, and the inseparable companion, in the fellowship of Christ, of Salome. She too stood by *the cross—she too* united with Salome and Mary

Magdalene in the preparation of the spices to anoint His sacred body after the crucifixion. She was one of those who received, from the angel at the sepulchre, the first announcement of the resurrection. She witnessed His second appearance, after He rose from the dead, and communicated it to the apostles. Nor should we forget that her husband Cleopas was one of the two favored disciples whom our Lord joined in the memorable walk to Emmaus.*

II. Let me next direct your minds to the PRIMARY PRINCIPLE OF PARENTAL DUTY, AND PRIMARY SOURCE OF PARENTAL BLESSING IN OUR TEXT.

We need not linger long on this portion of our subject. The history of Abraham's offering up his "only son," Isaac, is familiar to every child. It elevates Abraham at once to the preëminent dignity of the "friend of God." The voice of Jehovah twice proclaims the well-earned praise of this faithful and heroic deed—"Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me." And again, "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast *done this thing*, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only

* This family grouping of these eight apostles will be found strikingly enlarged upon in Mr. Anderson's excellent work on the Domestic Constitution.

son, that in blessing I will bless thee,"* &c. And the Lord Himself has twice equally proclaimed the PRINCIPLE upon which Abraham acted, which is disclosed to us in the words "not withheld," and "*not withheld from me.*" This, my dear brethren, is the mainspring of parental duty, at whatever violence to ourselves, or at whatever apparent violence to their feelings or interests—to give them up to God, to consecrate them to Him. To pray and desire that, whatever may be their walk in life, they may serve Him, and to act towards and by them in accordance with this desire and prayer.

But we must have a care not to confound this devotion of our children to God with blind enthusiasm, or barbarous bigotry, or a forgetfulness of our own natural duties towards them. Abraham's principle of action was not a blind infatuation rushing into an act of stoical cruelty ; nor even a blind faith losing itself in clouds and darkness. No ; it was an act of penetrating, clear-sighted, eagle-eyed faith piercing through the gloom and obscurity of fear and doubt and anguish, and soaring to the light beyond it. Upon the testimony of the inspired apostle, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac : and he that had received the pro-

* Gen. xxii., 12, 16.

mises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called : *accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.*"* Without this strong and discerning faith, Abraham's compassionate and loving heart must have sunk under the crushing weight of such an effort ; without this faith the uplifted hand would have been the hand of a murderer or an enthusiast. Just so is it with every Christian parent. In childhood, he lifts the rod, not because he does not pity, but because he looks beyond the cries which pierce his ears, to the subsequent improvement and subsequent blessing of his darling son. In their youth and afterlife, he will be content to thwart many a smiling project for his children, not because he is insensible to their disappointment, but because he looks beyond it, to the glory of God, and to the blessing and benefit to them, which he knows to be inseparable from it.

We have only further here to notice that the faithful discharge of parental duty, this carrying out of the principle of devotedness to God, upon which it was founded, was the *very source of parental blessing* to Abraham—hence we read the promise, " Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not

* Hebrews xi., 17—19.

withheld thy son, thine only son, in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply *thy seed*”—(*i. e.*, the posterity of Isaac)—“as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore, *and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.*” The entire giving up of his darling Isaac at the command of God was the very source and means of receiving him back again with so rich a superadded blessing.

III. It remains to shew you from Scripture **SOME OF THE LEADING BRANCHES OF PARENTAL DUTY**, springing from this principle of devotedness to God.

Nature itself points out how sedulously the God of nature strives to impress, even upon those ignorant of the Gospel, the all-important character of domestic duties. Hence the human being—the chief and noblest of God’s works on earth—is so long in coming to perfection, in order that the youthful mind may be informed, the habits guided and matured, and the temper moulded by those who feel the deepest and tenderest interest in his future welfare.

In addressing those who have not only the light of nature, but the light of God’s word to guide them, we may follow the plan of a modern excellent writer,*

* Anderson on the Domestic Constitution.



and divide the chief duties of parents into the three branches of family government, family devotion, and family education.

1. *Family government.* This is the parents' inalienable right and prerogative. In our still happy country the rights of parents over their offspring is, in most cases, legally superior to that of the sovereign; and, even in the most despotic countries, the very helplessness of children, and the burden which they prove to any other than their parents, shields, for the most part, this prerogative from extensive invasion. The atrocity of digesting and perpetrating systematically such an invasion, was, as we learn from various sources, reserved exclusively for the followers of Ignatius Layola, the founder of the Romish order of the Jesuits. Such is the importance attached in the New Testament to this family government on the part of parents, that it is made a cardinal point, a main root of all government in the Church of Christ. "A bishop then must be blameless," writes the apostle of the Gentiles to Timotheus, —, "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; *for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?*" A parent must not only remonstrate, but

rule; not only warn, but restrain. His sin was not that he did not expostulate, but "because his sons made *themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*"* The marginal reading of this passage is, because "he *frowned* not upon them;" an interpretation which brings before our minds a beautiful truth, which has been pointed out by a writer to whom I have already more than once referred.† It is this, that as the young infant possesses two irresistible claims upon the feelings and emotions of a parent, exercised by no inferior animal—the smile and the tear—so the parent possesses two corresponding engines of authority, which may be used from the earliest age—the smile and the frown. It may save you, my brethren who are present, much future anxiety if you bear these in mind; especially remembering their several uses—that is, remembering never to frown when you ought to smile, and never to smile when you ought to frown. When these gentler weapons fail, actual chastisements may sometimes be resorted to, but still *in love*; for it is written, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of *the Lord.*"‡ Some understand

* 1 Sam. iii., 13. † Anderson on the Domestic Constitution.

‡ Ephes. vi., 4.

this expression as implying in the *chastisement and remonstrance* of the Lord; but whichever way the passage may be rendered the meaning is plain, that parental government is to be conducted after the gracious and loving pattern of the Lord Jesus.

II. *Family devotion.* This is an indispensable element in every truly Christian household; and it is a thrilling fact for the instruction of parents, that the first recorded prayer in Scripture is that of Abraham for Ishmael, “and Abraham said unto God, O, that Ishmael might live before Thee;”* the prayer of a father for his child. Neither should we omit to mention, as shewing the connexion between the state of heart which prays for children and the enlarged benevolence which pours itself out in holy desires for the benefit even of the unworthy, that the next recorded prayer is again that of holy Abraham, in behalf of the inhabitants of Sodom.† We read of the constant and domestic prayers of David and Daniel—of the sacrifices of the family of Jesse—besides which the feast of the passover was, by its institution, not a temple but a family ordinance.

For the *times* of family worship—morning and evening—are indicated to us by the ordinances of

* Gen. xvii., 18. † Gen. xviii., 28.

heaven, in which the sun and moon are said to be set "for signs and for seasons," to rule the night and the day. They ought surely to remind us as "signs" of the recurring seasons of prayer, and call us, like God's people of old, to join with the royal psalmist, and say, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O, Most High ; to shew forth Thy loving kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night."* Corresponding with these periods were the morning and evening sacrifices enjoined on Israel, besides which these periods are most appropriate as terminating the alternate seasons of sleep and labour.

As to the *manner* of family devotion it should be marked by regularity—remembering that here, as in mere worldly things, "method is the soul of business ;" and by due solemnity, according to the feeling of holy David, "My heart standeth in awe of Thy word." In short, in conducting family worship let parents remember that it must be their aim not only to interest, but to *impress*.

III. It remains to consider another branch of parental duty, that of *family education*. This, as has been remarked, † is a most essential point, and quite

* *Psalms xcii.*, 1, 2. † Anderson on the Domestic Constitution.

distinct from government or subordination, or even instruction. Others may be charged with the temporary control or instruction of children, but it is only at home, under the parental roof and parental example, that they are educated. Family education begins with the first dawn of the powers of observation, and ends only with the termination of the period of parental control ; and O, what a responsibility is here ! It is not merely a parent's precepts, but his example and conduct which educate his children. Not only what you say to them, and the wise counsel you give them, but what you say and do before them will contribute to their education. Your tempers and tastes, your opinions and expressions, your amusements and occupations, your pursuits and companions, your very looks and tones and gestures will all tend, and tend powerfully to educate your children. Consider these things and lay them to heart my dear friends, and remember the end and issue of them—remember that you are either preparing your children, by your own example, for a life of holiness or a life of profaneness, a life of righteousness or a life of sin, a life of frivolity or a life of usefulness—for heaven or for hell.

Finally, dear brethren, let me press upon you from the whole subject, the momentous importance

of the trust committed to you as parents ; and that you can do nothing towards duly discharging it without God's holy Spirit, and hearts given to the Lord, like faithful Abraham's. It is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus which can alone fully turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and make you both a people prepared for the second coming of our Lord. If you neglect your children for eternity, their blood will be upon your heads, and you will have ruined those whom God has committed to your sympathy and care and love. Remember, too, that if you honor them above God, He has said, "Those that honor Me, I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." Let me further press upon you all the importance of family worship. The Scripture seems to take this for granted among God's people. We have already led you to consider the subject at some length, and I would now only remind you that the Lord's prayer itself seems to enjoin the practice upon you. "Give us this day our daily bread," is a petition nowhere so suitable as to the assembled members of a praying family.

Let me once more remind you of the vast moment of what we have called family education, and that children will not so much follow your precepts as your example ; and then to enable you to fulfil all



these high responsibilities to your God, to your country, to society at large, and to your beloved children, let me, in conclusion, remind you of that precious promise in the gospel of St. Luke, "If ye then, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!" Seek Him, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake; He will be your guide, your strength, your Comforter!

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SERMON VI.

ON THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

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ON THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

COLOSSIANS iii., 20.

“Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”

THE importance of our present subject, not only to the children, but to all here assembled, must be apparent to every reflecting mind. Every mind capable of turning within itself, and tracing the effects and consequences of early impressions, must be convinced of the deep and rooted influences of such impressions upon future character, and of the ensuing results upon that society into which the subject of those impressions has, in afterlife, been providentially thrown.

The influence of every one of us whose sun has passed the meridian of life—of every one who has

passed, as it were, the halfway house of man's allotted pilgrimage—must, in the nature of things, be yearly and daily drawing to its close; but the influence of the rising generation—of every strippling, every child, every infant whose life is destined to be prolonged upon this earthly stage—is gradually advancing and increasing. And this importance of our present subject is abundantly confirmed by the unerring testimony of the oracles of God. “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast ordained strength—Thou hast perfected praise,” says the divine Saviour; and again, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven”—passages and expressions which plainly intimate that, in the weakness and helplessness of childhood, a seed of grace and strength may be sown, which shall yield fruit to God's glory upon earth, and surround His throne with songs of triumphant and melodious praise, in his heavenly kingdom.

But while we thus estimate the magnitude of the interests involved in our subject; and while a sense of its magnitude should address itself powerfully to the hearts both of parents and philanthropists, in order to secure their co-operation in working out *God's gracious* purposes towards children, let my

young friends especially remember that the chief importance of our subject is with reference to **YOURSELVES**. To us your future career is and ought to be a question of deep and tender solicitude—to you it is no less than a question of life and death, an alternative of eternal happiness or eternal misery.

May our hearts, therefore, be lifted up in prayer for the Divine blessing on the weak words which may be uttered, while we endeavour to set before you—

I. THE SIMPLE CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLE'S INJUNCTION TO CHILDREN IN OUR TEXT, AND THE REASON FOR ITS SIMPLICITY;

II. THE BLESSING PRONOUNCED AND BESTOWED ON OBEDIENCE TO THE INJUNCTION; and

III. THE ALLOWED EXCEPTION TO OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS ON THE PART OF CHILDREN.

I. THE SIMPLE CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLE'S INJUNCTION TO CHILDREN, AND THE REASON FOR ITS SIMPLICITY.

“Children, obey your parents in all things.” Observe, dear children, here is one single direction given to you. The Lord does not encumber your memories, or confuse your minds, with a multitude of hard rules and complicated injunctions in this

epistle, but He gives you one—“*Obey your parents.*” But yet though this rule is not long, it is a very wide one. It takes in every thing, “*in all things.*” It includes your duties, your studies, your occupations, your amusements, your companions, the distribution of your time, the choice of your profession; for, it includes “all things.” And, like God’s other commandments, it is not grievous, but gracious—exceeding gracious. Your tender age, your many wants, your want of experience, render it indispensably necessary that you should be provided with protection, on the one hand, and be placed under guidance and subjection, on the other; and the Lord places you, for both these, in the hands of tender parents—of those who are taught by nature to love you; who gave you being, whose hearts yearn towards you, whom you yourselves love, and whose earnest affection for you must hinder them, for the most part, from exercising the authority, with which He has invested them, with undue harshness or wanton cruelty. Can “a father” cease “to pity his children?” “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” The exceptions to this pity and compassion are so rare that those who constitute them *are monsters and not men.*

And there is a *reason* for the simplicity of this commandment to you. The very constitution and condition of your nature points it out? Why is it that the inferior animals so speedily come to maturity, forsake and are forsaken by their parents; while man, with all his noble and superior faculties; with speech, reason, imagination, invention, intellect, is born the most helpless of beings, grows so slowly, and acquires the perfection of speech and ordinary knowledge by such a slow and tardy process? Only because of the vast importance of his moral influence in this world, and the incalculable and tremendous importance of his future destiny! Hence the necessity for this tedious training—the indispensable requisite of discipline to his untutored mind; subjection for his unruly passions; chastening to his stubborn will; subjugation to the pride of his understanding, the wantonness of his imagination, the impatience and highmindedness of his intellect, the inexperience and rashness of his judgment. In a word, this subjection and discipline are required and provided, that a character of sobriety and self-control, of circumspection and humility, of caution and firmness and wisdom, should be trained and formed in that only school morally capable of pro-

ducing it—the school of strict, implicit, unhesitating, undeviating obedience.

II. THE BLESSING PRONOUNCED AND BESTOWED ON OBEDIENCE TO THE INJUNCTION.

“For this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” God has declared and stamped it to be so in many ways. He has affixed the broad seal of His approbation to filial obedience; in the patriarchal and Jewish histories; in the law and the prophets; and in the example and precepts of His well-beloved Son.

To turn to *patriarchal history*. What a speaking and touching instance of filial obedience do we find in Isaac! Able, in his youthful vigour, to bear the heavy burden of the wood for the burnt-offering up the steep mountain side, he yet submits, without a struggle or an effort, to be bound by the feebleness of his parent, to be laid resistless upon the altar, and to await the stroke of the uplifted knife and the flame of the consuming fire! And what a rich and ready blessing is speedily poured upon his obedience! Jehovah’s voice of love proclaims his rescue—“Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything to him;” and immediately adds the cheering and delightful message, both to the tried and faithful father and the tried and obedi-

ent son, "I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"—a blessing at once gratifying to parental love, and rewarding to filial obedience.

Proceeding to the *Jewish history*, I shall single out one most prominent, but, perhaps not much noticed instance of the Divine blessing on filial obedience, which occurs with reference to a very remarkable family—that of the Kenites. The Kenites were descended from Midian, the fourth son of Abraham by Keturah; and their destiny seems to have been bound up and linked with that of God's ancient people in no common way. The sacred writers mention them, "first when Israel was travelling to Canaan; then just before entering it; and then soon after they got possession; once in the time of the judges; once during the reign of the kings; then just before the captivity of Judah; and finally at the restoration again to Palestine" from Babylon. "It almost seems," says a late excellent writer,* "as if nothing very great or decisive, with regard to the Jews, could take place, without their being at least noticed, for it is only on great occasions, or at certain eras that they are

* Anderson on the Domestic Constitution.

introduced at all." But we bring them forward principally and especially in connexion with Jehovah's blessing on their filial obedience. Their descendants were the Rechabites, who are so honorably mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah; and who were enjoined by their father, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, in order, probably, to preserve them from the contamination of the idolatry and excesses which were then about to bring down God's judgments upon the Jewish people, neither to dwell in houses, nor to plant fields and vineyards, nor to drink any wine or strong drink. They obeyed these commands rigorously and punctitiously, and the prophet is, therefore, commanded to pronounce upon them the most emphatic blessing, "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab, your father, and kept *all* his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you; therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever." The sacred historian, Ezra, records the fruits of this promise in the return of the Kenites from the captivity of Babylon; and Dr. Wolff (who *was so lately amongst us*) informs us that the Recha-

bites still exist in power and numbers in the east—a distinct family, a monument of the faithfulness of the blessing and of the truth of the promises of God.

But again, the Lord has affixed the seal of His approbation to filial obedience in the *law and the prophets*. In the law of the ten commandments, as honor to God stands at the head of the first table, so honoring fathers and mothers stands at the head of the second table; and a blessing is attached to it, “*So shall thy days be long in the land which the Lord thy God hath given thee.*” From the prophets we have already quoted one passage in the writings of Jeremiah; and we must allude again to that most striking passage, already quoted in addressing Parents—the closing words of the prophet Malachi, and of the canon of the Old Testament. When speaking of the immediate precursor of the Messiah, the prophet uses this very remarkable expression, “*And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers*, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” As if he had said, the neglect of parental duty, and *filial obedience* would be sins which would especially bring down the wrath of God to the uttermost, upon the Jewish nation; and as if the happy fulfilment of these duties would be the special

characteristic of the true people of God, who should inherit the blessings of the Gospel dispensation.

Lastly, God has put the seal of His blessing to filial obedience *in the example and precepts of His Son our Saviour*. Towards His heavenly Father such was His obedience that He could say, "It is My meat to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." "I do always such things as please Him." Even towards His earthly parents, it is written that He abode with them till he was thirty years of age. Now, when we consider the stupendous work that He had to perform—to fulfil the law—to accomplish the types and shadows and prophecies—to complete the redemption of man, and that His whole life was little more than thirty-three years upon the earth—no words can, in any way, describe or express so forcibly as this one fact, the prodigious magnitude, in the sight of God, of family relations in general, and of obedience to parents in particular. And His precepts are in strict accordance with this example. In the sermon to the Pharisees, He reproaches them with their hypocritical breach of filial obligation,* even though it was disguised with the specious veil of devotedness to God. To the young ruler who came to Him

* Matthew xv., 3, 7.

to know "what good thing" he should do, He repeats the commandment "Honor thy father and thy mother." Even when expiring upon the cross He enjoins upon all His followers, by the legacy bequeathed to the disciple whom He loved, the last importance of filial duty—"He saith to the disciple, Behold thy mother." By His apostles, after His death and resurrection, children are still taught the same lesson, both in our text and in parallel passages. And, finally, to shew that as the blessing rests upon obedience, so the wrath of God will descend upon the disobedience of these precepts; and that neglect of filial duty, under the New Testament dispensation, will be attended with the same disastrous consequences as under the Old, the apostle Paul, re-echoes, as it were, the solemn denunciation of Malachi, by including in the catalogue of the crimes of the last days and the perilous times before Christ's second advent, "*disobedience to parents.*"*

III. It remains to notice, in few words, THE ALLOWED EXCEPTION TO OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS ON THE PART OF CHILDREN.

This exception extends only to one case—where the parent may enjoin what is directly contrary to the Word of God. In this case, the admonitory

* 2 Timothy iii., 2.

precept holds good, "He that loveth father or mother more than *Me* is not worthy of *Me*." Our blessed Lord has, perhaps, shewn us the rudiments of this exception when He tarried behind his parents at Jerusalem, and, when found by them in the temple, after they had sought Him sorrowing, He replied, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" God is to each one of us the Father of our spirits, the Redeemer of our souls, the God of our comforts, and has a nearer, dearer, closer and more permanent connexion, with all His children, than any earthly parent. But even here, as in the case of our Lord just quoted, the obligation to earthly parents is suspended only, for the solitary occasion, not dissolved; it is placed in abeyance, not annulled; for it was immediately after this temporary absence that we find it recorded, "He went down to Nazareth with His parents, *and was subject unto them.*"* There can be no parallel case of superior religious light in a child over the parent stronger than this. Let children, then, learn that, except in the case of an express command of God to the contrary, they are bound, in the main, to obey even ~~irreligious~~ ^{irreligious} or unenlightened parents, and to honor them as parents. And let them remember

* Luke ii., 51.

that, as our blessed Lord never expressed a sentiment which He did not feel, the honor which He paid was the honor of His heart, and not merely that of the lip. Let them, then, pray for the Spirit of the Lord Jesus to dwell in them, to conform them to His image, to make them like Him, that thus they may "obey their parents in all things;" and let them be assured that, notwithstanding all the evil examples around them, and the natural pride and resistance of their own hearts, which would lead them to rebel, this and this only, "is well pleasing unto the Lord."

In conclusion, dear children, I have a melancholy satisfaction in being enabled to allude, with thankfulness, to the effect and power of the grace of our God in that young person* so recently snatched from the endearments of her afflicted family by,

* The concluding portion of this sermon is in allusion to the daughter of Major-general Stuart, whose sudden death, at the early age of sixteen, has created a strong sensation of sorrow and sympathy in the whole neighbourhood. This dear child, whose character has been here imperfectly sketched, had been accompanying her beloved mother in a little walk in the garden; she had visited, with her, some pet pigeons, and left her to go into the stables to give some bread to one of the carriage horses. It is supposed that the animal, which has always been good tempered, took fright at something, and kicked; for a noise was heard by the coachman, who, on running in, found her lying senseless on the stable floor. She was immediately carried out, but, from a severe blow on the head, life was extinct. She had that very day been frequently running to the window to look at the young lambs in the field, and to see that her pony, which was feeding by them, had not kicked or injured any of them!

what might appear to us, a sudden and untimely death, though there is good reason to conclude from the sure warrant of the Word of God, that the change has been to her one of unspeakable happiness and blessing.

I speak of her with some reserve, as, in asking permission to mention her this evening from her dear and sorrowing mother, I received an express injunction to say nothing which could in any way give honor to the creature, except in so far as it might exhibit the power and loveliness of the sovereign grace of Christ, in one whose childlike and unpretending consistency of conduct gave evidence of her acceptance with our heavenly Father, in Him and for His sake.

This beloved child had been early taught to shew her religion rather by her actions than by her words. In general, this is the safest and surest method of a religious profession in young persons—to act rather than to talk—to follow Christ, in temper and conduct, rather than to be loud or forward in speaking of religion. The suddenness of her summons prevented that sweet and lovely testimony to the love and faithfulness of the Redeemer, which we are sometimes privileged to witness in the illness *and death* of young disciples;—when the nearness of

eternity stamps with reality their glowing words of confidence and hope and praise ; and when the charm of youthful purity and simplicity is dignified and solemnised by the departing maturity of heavenly grace. Yet we can thankfully say that, though, in the mysterious providence of God, this was not permitted to her, she, too, has obtained "a good report through faith;" even that humble, steady "obedience of faith" in which she lived, and by which her conduct was animated and regulated. Extreme thankfulness, self-denying love to her brothers and sisters, diligence in her studies, a conscientious and scrupulous discharge of domestic duties, simplicity of taste, a rich enjoyment of family blessings combined with a singular disregard for the dissipation and frivolities of the world, maturity and sobriety of judgment, in conjunction with the most childlike submission, were among the lovely fruits of the spirit of Christ, which shewed that His sanctifying and subduing grace had early marked her for its own. The genuine kindness of her heart, extending even to the inferior animals, was touchingly manifested in the way in which she met her death ; and it may prove one source of comfort to her bereaved parents, when time has in some measure healed their wounded hearts, that her

last act was an act of kindness to one of God's creatures. On the last Sabbath of her life, though scarcely recovered from an illness, she expressed a strong desire to attend the house of God, and being permitted to do so, she listened with attention to the pure doctrines of the Gospel from the lips of her faithful pastor.* She honored that Gospel in her life, and, when occasion required, she could confess her attachment to it with her lips. I am acquainted with an instance in which, with artless and ingenuous frankness, she vindicated her supreme respect for the Word of God; but I am prohibited from mentioning it on so public an occasion.

One of the most marked features in her character was implicit filial obedience. Only once since early childhood had her beloved parent occasion to reprove her for an approach to forgetfulness of due submission to authority; and that was occasioned by a generous and affectionate wish to interpose in favor of another who had incurred temporary displeasure. She was no sooner reproved for this interference with parental authority, than she acquiesced in the justice of the rebuke, and wept bitterly.

In endeavouring, on the day after her death, to

* *Rev. E. Eardley Wilmot, vicar of Kenilworth.*

console one of her afflicted parents, who was agonizing under the keenness and weight of the blow, I asked to see her Bible. I was led to make the request from a strong impression on my mind, suggested, probably, by the vivid recollection which arose of the comfort derived from the inspection of the Bible of an interesting young officer, whose death bed I had attended about two years ago; and I felt impelled to hope that in this case also some passages might be found marked in private study, which, when compared with conduct, might shew that she whom we mourned had, like that young soldier, taken God's Word for "a lamp unto her feet, and a light unto her path." I was told, however, that she had never been in the habit of marking her Bible. A few days afterwards, I repeated my visit, and found that agonizing grief had been replaced by submissive yet sorrowing resignation. I spoke again to her dear parent of the assurance we might humbly and thankfully entertain of her present and eternal happiness; and I read from the New Testament, in reference to her strongly developed filial obedience, the first clause of our present text, "Children, obey your parents in all things"—I was interrupted by that parent, who concluded the passage for me—"for this is well

pleasing unto the Lord ;” and she added, “ Yes, and after you were gone on Friday evening, I found that passage marked in Annie’s Bible.”

O, that every parent here present may be led thus faithfully to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ! O, that the holy Spirit may write this blessed precept upon the hearts of the children here assembled, and upon the hearts of all the rising generation in our beloved country !

SERMON VII.

**ON THE DUTIES OF BROTHERS
AND SISTERS.**

SERMON VII.

ON THE DUTIES OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

1 PETER iii., 8.

“Love as brethren; be pitiful, be courteous.”

You may at once perceive that, in adducing this text as a foundation on which to build the enforcement of the family duties of brothers and sisters, I use it by way of accommodation. But the accommodation is legitimate. The apostle, in the text, takes for granted the principle of love among the brothers and sisters of a family, and from this principle he argues and enforces the duty of brotherly love among believers. He identifies the two principles and the two duties, so that, what might be said of the one principle and duty, may be said also of the other.

May the spirit of our gracious God be with us, and enable us to derive profit from the subject—to discern the principle, and to act upon it, to the praise of His glory, through the grace which is in Christ Jesus!

I. Let me, then, draw your attention TO THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH LOVE AMONG BROTHERS AND SISTERS IS BASED.

II. TO THE MEANS BY WHICH THAT LOVE IS TO BE PRACTICALLY MAINTAINED.

I. Let me draw your attention TO THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH LOVE AMONG BROTHERS AND SISTERS IS BASED.

It is based, as we learn from the antecedent part of the verse from which our text is taken, upon oneness of mind and readiness of sympathy—“*Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another.*”

It is based upon oneness of mind—“*Be ye all of one mind ;*” or, as it may be read, be ye *like-minded*, including the mind or reflections; the thought or ideas; the will, or the desires and determination of the soul. The children of God have in them the principle of likemindedness, through the one spirit of the Father and the Lord Jesus; teaching them to make the same reflections on the same

objects, suggesting the same ideas on the same subjects, and determining them to the same will under the same circumstances. And, just in proportion to the measure of their subjection to the guidance of the Spirit, will this oneness of mind be incipient or complete, perfect or imperfect.

So should it be, if in a state of obedience, with the children of the same earthly family. Besides the general family resemblance, which almost invariably may be traced in some of its features, in the natural characters, all their habits have been formed in the same school; their ideas and reflections have been suggested, inculcated and matured under the same external conditions; their dispositions trained under the precepts and example of the same parents; and their wills determined by circumstances of common interest to the same objects. This whole casting of the mind in the same mould is one great foundation of common and mutual love among brothers and sisters.

Another great foundation of brotherly love in a family is *readiness of sympathy*; "*having compassion one of another*;" or, as it might also be rendered, sympathizing one with another. The children of God again are taught this lesson by the one pervading and animating Spirit by which all

are quickened and made alive from sin, and being thus quickened together, are united together in one common interest. As it must be said of the members of the body, so it must be said of the members of God's family, though they are oftentimes ignorant of the truth, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it."* There is an intimate relation, however much forgotten—a relation of cause and effect between the honor and suffering of one member of the true Church of God, and the honor or suffering of all the other members. Even so is it with brothers and sisters of an earthly family. So long as they are united in the same home, the joys and sorrows of the one must necessarily radiate, as from a centre, towards all; common interests are involved, and there is no way of escape from a community of effects and consequences. This is another and a great foundation of common and mutual love.

And wherever love does not exist among brothers and sisters in a family, we may at once pronounce that there is some disturbing cause in their like-mindedness, or oneness of mind; or some deficiency in their readiness of sympathy; that they are not,

* 1 Cor. xii., 26.

as the apostle commands, "of one mind;" that they have not "compassion one of another."

Sometimes, alas! this is greatly attributable to the parents. The minds, ideas and wills of the parents are not formed and determined by the mind and will of God. They live to sin, or self, or the world. Their mind and will consequently vary with the fitful tide of passion, or with the shifting sands of self-interest. Nothing is fixed or stable—hence their children's ideas and habits are not regulated by any settled or uniform principles—hence they, too, drift with every wind of circumstance, like vessels without helm or anchor. I would address such parents and ask—How can you expect, as far as your example may influence your children, that they will be likeminded? So, also, with reference to readiness of sympathy. If you parents shew none towards each other—if, instead of blessed harmony, there be constant discord—if, instead of tender sympathy, there be, between yourselves, heartless and selfish indifference—how can your children be taught readiness of sympathy?

But very frequently the fault is with the children—with the brothers and sisters.

With so many outward things to produce like-mindedness, and so many common interests to

produce mutual sympathy, it not unfrequently happens that, even under Christian management and control, there are disputes and differences. I speak to children under such circumstances, and say—You may be sure “there is utterly a fault among you.”

It becomes, then, each of you to enquire—With whom does this want of likemindedness originate? Why is it that the cord of sympathy is thus broken? Our parents have done all in their power to leave upon our minds the common impress of obedience to Christ; their conduct has been such as, in general, to give us an example of sympathizing love, and to draw forth, from our young hearts, the tender emotions of self-denying affection. Whence, then, is this difference of judgment? Whence this estrangement of feeling? Some of the fault may lie with others, but how much of it with me? Is there no perversity in my judgment? No blindness or obstinacy in my will? No harshness in my temper? No want of consideration in my conduct? No want of feeling in my heart? Is it a sincere conscience, or is it self? Is it wisdom or waywardness? Is it faithful love or lukewarmness of affection, which produces this jarring and division, *this disunion and discord?*

To determine such questions,—how invaluable is the Word of God as a standard, the throne of grace as a resource! Amid such conflicting influences, what standard can be infallible but the inspired Word of Christ, who is the Truth? With a deceitful heart within, and a wicked tempter without, who can silence the murmurs of passion, answer the cavils of prejudice, unravel the web of pride and ignorance, detect the by-ends of egotism and selfishness but God, who knoweth the hearts and trieth the reins? “Make me to know the way of Thy commandments!” “Incline not my heart to any evil thing!” “Grant me Thy law graciously!” “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts!” These are the prayers for the brothers and sisters in a Christian family where there is a breach of love and harmony.

Even among other families. After every deduction is allowed on account of the sinister influence of parental example, or the want of parental instruction, there remains a sufficiency of common interest among brothers and sisters, to produce a considerable amount of likemindedness and community of sympathy. In the worst regulated families, brothers and sisters are still linked together by many ties of mutual benefit and advantage, and by many remem-

branches of mutual offices of kindness. These call for love and mutual "compassion;" and God, who has, in His wisdom, united you in one family connexion—who has, in his love, given His own Son for you—and, in His grace, promised His own Spirit to them that ask Him—who has revealed His own Word for your guidance, and vouchsafes such promises for your strength and support, will assuredly bring you into judgment for your own sins in this respect. Whatever have been the errors of your parents, you have had sufficient light to avoid them; whatever their evil example, you have had sufficient inducements to forsake the imitation of them, and you will have to answer at the last great Day, for your own iniquities!

II. But let me now draw your attention to THE MEANS BY WHICH LOVE AMONG BROTHERS AND SISTERS IS TO BE PRACTICALLY MAINTAINED.

If it be said in God's Word, as we have seen, "*Love as brethren.*" If the principle on which this love is founded be oneness of mind and readiness of sympathy, so also the practical rules are added for the maintenance of this love—"Be pitiful, be courteous."

"Be pitiful" or as it may be interpreted be tender-hearted. Let your sympathy be shewn.

Do not conceal and hide it. Do not check and disguise it. Do not defer, suppress, or trifle with it. Let it flow and overflow. "Be pitiful." Be ready to indulge your sympathy in every trial—your compassion in every infirmity. Let it be manifest in words of comfort and actions of kindness. Brothers and sisters lose much by want of attention to this heaven-taught rule.

What an example was the Lord Jesus, not only of sympathy, but of sympathetic kindness—not only of heartfelt compassion, but of words and deeds of compassion.

On many occasions, we read in the Gospel, that the Lord Jesus was "moved with compassion;" but never do we find that His compassion evaporated in empty sentiment; it was always accompanied by some substantial act of kindness. When the leper came to Him in his uncleanness, and besought Him, we read that He was "moved with compassion;"* but then we also read that He said to him, "I will, be thou clean," and He touched him, and his leprosy was cleansed. When the multitude was in want of bread, we read that He had "compassion."† There were but seven loaves, but the Lord Jesus blessed and brake, and fed them all. "When

* Matt. i., 41.

† Mark viii., 2.

the two blind men cried to Him, "Have mercy on us," He had "compassion;"* but then He also touched their eyes, and they received sight. When the weeping widow of Nain followed the bier of her only son, the Lord Jesus had "compassion;"† and then he stopped the sorrowing procession, raised the dead, and delivered him to his mother. When the attendant crowds presented themselves to His all-seeing eye, in the misery of ignorance and unbelief, He had "compassion;"‡ but then we read that He not only sent forth His twelve apostles, to heal and to instruct them, but that He also Himself "taught them many things."§

This is the pattern to brothers and sisters of true pitifulness, of true tenderness of heart. You cannot, like Him, heal the broken in heart; but you can pour into the wound the balm of consolation. You may not be able to supply every want; but you can, perchance, provide the seven loaves, and look to the Lord Jesus to multiply them with His blessing. You cannot remove from a brother or a sister their ignorance or hardness of heart; but you can both lift up your souls in prayer to Him to do so, and may also begin to teach them "many things." You cannot cure the leprosy of sin and sorrow; but you

* *Matt. xx., 34.* † *Luke vii., 13.* ‡ *Matt. ix., 36.* § *Mark vi., 34.*

can, at least, put forth the hand of compassion, in order to their deliverance from it, and point the blind eye to Him who can give both light and blessing. Be, then, really, practically tender-hearted — “be pitiful.”

Another rule is added — “*Be courteous.*” Real love, genuine honest kindness, and cordial sympathy, may often lose much of their value and lustre, from the want of courtesy. Christian courtesy is the polish to the diamond, the setting to the pearl, of brotherly love. It removes the friction from acts of condescension, words of forgiveness, counsels of instruction among brothers and sisters. It is the oil for many of the waters of strife, the balm for many a wound, the cement for many a rent and division. No nearness of connexion, no intimacy of relation, not even the union of husband and wife, can dispense with the claims, or release from the obligations, of courtesy. Breaches of courtesy, though they may not cut so deeply, frequently produce more irritation, than acts of positive unkindness. To “*be courteous*” is an essential rule, for preserving harmony and increasing love, among brothers and sisters.

The blessed Saviour was the pattern and exemplar of real courtesy. His conduct was equally free, from

harshness and discourtesy, as from flattery and dissimulation. His acts of solid kindness and beneficence were never marred and sullied by unkind words or inconsiderate expressions. Wherever there was room for praise, He freely gave it. "O, woman, great is thy faith. Thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace." "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona." These were instances of most kindly courtesy in candid praise—praise which the Saviour never once withheld when justly due. Whenever, also, the Lord Jesus could safely blunt the edge of rebuke He did so. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," was the considerate, as well as forcible, introduction to the reproof of the Pharisee, in whose house He was an invited, but not well-honored guest. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" was another instance of searching but most courteous rebuke. Again, His invitation to Andrew and the other disciple of John the Baptist to come and see where He dwelt, and to abide with Him;* His taking the little children in His arms, His blessing and delivering them again to their parents, and, finally, His washing the disciples' feet and wiping them with

* John i., 39.

the towel wherewith he was girded, after the last supper, though they were manifestations of higher and deeper purposes, were, also, exhibitions of the Saviour's courtesy.

To be truly courteous, my dear brethren—to be courteous in private as well as in public, you must be like the Lord Jesus. Christian courtesy is a compound of truth and love. Without love, courtesy is but a hollow mask for indifference. Without truth, it only deceives and injures its object. Genuine and wholesome courtesy is the fruit of God's own Spirit.

In applying this subject to ourselves, my dear brethren, let it, as viewed in the light of Scripture, lead us all to self-humiliation. What a family picture of unity and love does the Word of God pourtray for our imitation! What a marring and defacing of its beauty do we behold when we look within. If we be bound in family relations—blessed with brothers and sisters after the flesh—how often have we overthrown the foundations of brotherly love, by our want of likemindedness and readiness of sympathy?—how often have we violated its laws by want of tenderness of spirit and kindly courtesy? If without these ties in a strictly household sense, still let us remember that they exist, in all their

obligations, to bind us to the family of God. The unconverted man, who hates or despises the people of Christ, has trodden brotherly-love under his feet. The most consistent believer has, perhaps, with reference to some of his brethren of the household of FAITH, not unfrequently slighted or forgotten its holy precepts.

And, finally, let this subject again lead us all to adoring gratitude to God the Father, for the inestimable gift of His well-beloved Son. He, (the Lord Jesus) as the author of our being, is also the author of family relation, of family love, and family enjoyments. He, as the redeemer of souls, came to write ETERNITY upon the endearing ties of home and kindred; and to sanctify to God the Father's glory all the tender outgoings of brotherly and sisterly affection. He came to remove the heartburnings of discord and division; to eradicate the bitter plants of jealousy and selfishness and strife; and to unite His people, like the family of Bethany, in one common bond of holy love and peace. He came to impart to us the indwelling and the influences of His Divine Spirit, to enable us to look to His Father as our Father, to Himself as our elder brother, and to bind us together in one blessed family, bearing *His name*, wearing His image, and, finally, par-

taking, as brethren, in His inheritance at His coming glory. He sent His Spirit into David's heart to declare to all the children of men, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is"—good and pleasant in the sight of God and man, "for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

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